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TREATISES

ON VARIOUS

THEOLOGICAL SUBJECTS,

PUBLISHED AT DIFFERENT TIMES,

AND NOW COLLECTED INTO VOLUMES.

BY THOMAS SCOTT, D.D.

AUTHOR OF A COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE, &c.

VOL. I.

A DISCOURSE UPON REPENTANCE.
A TREATISE ON GROWTH IN GRACE.
ANSWER TO PAINE'S AGE OF REASON.
A COLLECTION OF FAMILY PRAYERS.

FROM THE PHILADELPHIA EDITION.

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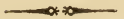

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A

DISCOURSE

UPON

REPENTANCE.

THE EIGHTH EDITION.

"And they went forth, and preached that men should repent."
MARK vi. 12.

PREFACE.

THE importance of the subject treated of, and the rank which it holds in the word of God, among the doctrines and duties of Christianity; the backwardness of mankind to attend to it, in proportion to that importance; and an apprehension that it is not insisted on, either from the pulpit or the press, so frequently and strenuously in our times, as it was in the days of the apostles; form, collectively, the reasons which induced me to this publication. Much ignorance, and various hurtful and perplexing mistakes and difficulties, about repentance, may be observed, both amongst professors of serious godliness and others: I therefore thought, that it might not be unseasonable, or unprofitable, to publish a discourse upon the subject.

My first intention was only to send to the press the substance of a sermon, I had repeatedly preached; but the same reasons influenced me, upon mature consideration, to complete the design, as far as I was capable; though the size and price are both by that means increased.

Some passages may be judged to bear hard upon certain popular sentiments, and current species of religion. I have, indeed, very plainly spoken my mind respecting several things, which, I am convinced, are detrimental to the cause of pure religion: but I hope I have not transgressed the rules of meekness and candour. Even wise and good men, in their zeal for one part of divine truth, may drop unguarded expressions, that *bear an interpretation* injurious to another part of equal importance: and thus, undesignedly, by their reputation give sanction to error. This our artful and watch-

ful enemy will be sure to observe, and make his advantage of, in opposing true religion; by which some may be deceived, others hardened, and religion itself exposed to contempt and reproach.

It behooves, then, other friends of religion, who are witnesses of such perversions, to oppose and obviate them: nor must the reputation of some, or the censure of others, among their fellow-servants be regarded, when the glory of God, the interests of religion, and the salvation of souls, are at stake. Were some pious men, now in glory, to return [illegible], and witness the abuse that has been made [illegible] to perversions they employed, they would be the [illegible] endeavour to counteract their fatal tendency.

With plainness and freedom, I would plead the cause of truth and holiness; but would give no *needless* offence to any man. May that God, whom I would "serve with my spirit, in the Gospel of his "Son," powerfully succeed this feeble attempt to promote his glory in the salvation of souls.

Olney, *Feb.* 2, 1785.

Preface to the Sixth Edition.

MORE than eighteen years having now elapsed, since this discourse was first published; and the Author having in that time had much opportunity of comparing what he had written, both with the Scriptures, and with the state of religion at present; after carefully revising the work, he thinks it incumbent on him to annex to this Sixth Edition, a declaration, that he is more than ever convinced, that the real nature of true repentance is here described; that there can be no saving faith where this repentance is wanting; that many false views of Christianity may be detected by this touchstone; and that the necessity and nature of true repentance are generally too little insisted on, in evangelical instructions.

THOMAS SCOTT.

ASTON SANDFORD, *April* 19, 1803.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Christian religion, as St. Paul preached it both to the Jews and Gentiles, consists of "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord "Jesus Christ," and may, therefore, be properly called the religion of a sinner; for none but sinners need repentance, or faith in a Mediator, or that forgiveness of sins, which through him is preached to all that believe.

This consideration ought carefully to be attended to; Jesus Christ "came not to call the righteous, "but sinners to repentance;" and if men lose sight of this peculiarity of the Gospel, they will mistake in a fundamental concern; and be offended with those ministers, who alone address them in a scriptural method. Our business, as preachers of the Gospel, is not with men merely as rational agents, but with men as sinners. We must not address them, as if they were newly entered on a state of trial; were as yet free from all blame; and were at last to stand or fall according to their future good or bad behaviour, and only needed to be instructed in their duty, and excited to perform it. This is not the state of the case. Even the most moral, respectable, and amiable of mankind are *sinners*, condemned sinners.

In this light the word of God considers us, and informs us, (not "What good thing we may do to inherit eternal life," but,) "What we must do to be "saved" from impending ruin; whither a sinner "may flee from the wrath to come." And thus must the faithful minister address his hearers, calling upon them as sinners, to repent and believe the Gospel.

"By one man, sin entered into the world, and death "by sin; and so death passed upon all men†." In consequence of the awful sentence, "Dust thou art, "and to dust thou shalt return," millions through successive generations have yielded to the stroke; all the former inhabitants of the earth are swept into the grave by one general execution: many are at this moment experiencing the agonies of death; numbers are bewailing their departed and departing friends and relatives.—We too feel the consequences of sin in our own personal pains and sickness, which are the forerunners and earnests of our dissolution: we too must have the sentence executed upon us in all its rigour. The wisest cannot elude it, the strongest cannot resist its stroke, nor can the richest purchase exemption from it.

The constant and extensive ravages of death are in themselves extremely affecting to the considerate spectator: but become more so when we reflect, that as certainly as when a malefactor is dragged from prison, and executed on a scaffold, he dies for breaking the laws of the land; so certainly, when a sinner dies, he dies for breaking the law of God.

† Rom. v. 12.

Had sin and death been hitherto equally unknown to mankind; and now in our days had sin first made its entrance: immediately upon man's rebellion had we heard the sentence audibly and solemnly denounced; "Dust ye are, and to dust ye shall return:" had fevers, dropsies, palsies, apoplexies, consumptions, and other mortal diseases on the one hand; with earthquakes, famines, and wars on the other, suddenly begun to spread desolation through families, villages, cities, and kingdoms among the guilty alone: should we behold at once multitudes dead, and multitudes in the agonies of death, the rest mourning over their beloved friends, and trembling for themselves; (like Egypt, when there was not a house in which there was not one dead:) the connexion betwixt transgressing the divine law, and being punished with death, might be more affecting but would not be more certain, than it now is; though it is seldom seriously laid to heart.

Or were men in general free from sin; but from time to time one and another transgressed; who immediately upon transgressing, was punished by death, according to the examples of vindictive justice recorded in the Scriptures: the connexion would be more attended to: but not more certain than at present; when, "because sentence against an evil "work is not executed *speedily*, therefore the heart "of the sons of men is wholly set in them to do "evil*."

But as all have sinned, and all die, and things have gone on so for many generations, death is con-

* Eccles. viii. 11.

sidered as a thing of course: we live in the midst of its devastations without horror, or uneasy reflections; and inquire little why it is so? or what the consequence will be? Like soldiers, who grow inured to scenes of blood, and insensible to dangers, through being familiar with them.

But this, solemn and alarming as it is, forms only a small part of the sentence of condemnation which we lie under. Our Lord warns us, "not to fear "them that kill the body, and after that have no "more that they can do, but to fear him who is able "to destroy both body and soul in hell." In comparison with this effect of divine wrath, the worst that men can do to us, is not, in the judgment of the Son of God, worthy of our fear. Yet the bare recital of those tortures, which the cruelty of man hath invented and inflicted in killing the body, is sufficient to chill our very blood: how dreadful, therefore, must they have been to those who endured them! And what must that misery be, compared with which the other is not worth a fear? Yet to this awful destruction every sinner is condemned for breaking the law, and rebelling against the authority of his Creator.

Imagine to yourselves a company of condemned criminals in a dungeon. A warrant arrives,—one is taken from them; they see him no more; know not what becomes of him; and do not readily believe any reports which reach them of the tortures he endured, and the pains he suffered; another is thus taken from them, and another. The remainder still suppose that their companions are only released from the miseries of a dungeon; and expect their

own turn merely as a similar deliverance. All this time, however, certain messengers from the king earnestly persuade them to submit, ask forgiveness, and accept of mercy. A few are prevailed upon, and dismissed; but the rest seeing no difference betwixt those who are taken from them by a warrant, and those who are set at liberty with a pardon, persist in their obstinacy, and treat all persuasion with neglect and contempt.

This is the exact representation of the condition men are in. Death removes our friends and neighbours, one by one: we see not how they fare in another world; nor are we disposed to believe that "they lift up their eyes in hell, being in torments;" (though this is indeed the awful condition of all who die impenitent.) Our turn will shortly come; but we are seldom duly apprehensive about the consequences. "All things happen alike to all; as dieth "the sinner, so dieth the righteous:" each is released from the evils of life; faith alone can follow the one to heaven, and the other to hell: but all men have not faith; therefore most treat with neglect and contempt the preachers of the Gospel, who inform them of their danger, and in God's name call upon them to repent, believe, and be saved.

But, beloved, though much grieved and discouraged by this neglect, we must not desist, nor would we despair of success. Let me beseech you then to keep in your mind these solemn and important truths, whilst with all seriousness, earnestness, and tender compassion, I address you as condemned sinners, in danger of eternal misery. We must take God's part against you, and vindicate his justice in

that awful sentence he hath denounced: but we can sympathize with you, and weep over you, and "long after you in the bowels of Jesus Christ." We also were involved in the same guilt, and under the same condemnation, we were equally secure and obstinate in sin, and equally negligent of salvation. But being now, through God's mercy, made sensible of our guilt and danger; and having upon repentance found forgiveness, and enjoying the hopes and first fruits of eternal happiness, we are desirous our fellow-sinners should share our deliverance, and experience our felicity.

To be instrumental to the salvation of your souls, my fellow-sinners, is all to which the true minister of Christ aspires. However your minds may be blinded by the god of this world, we see your danger, and mourn over your delusion. Your fondness for perishing vanities, and disregard to your eternal interest, excite our compassion; and would excite our indignation and astonishment, had not we too been equally sottish. Of the worth of your souls, the danger they are exposed to, the preciousness of salvation, and the happiness of being truly religious, we are deeply convinced. "We have believed, and therefore speak:" and though in ourselves unworthy and insufficient; yet being entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, "we are now ambassadors for "Christ, and as though God did beseech you by us, "we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled "unto God."

The most high God hath prepared a royal feast; all things are ready, rich abundance of provisions, and plenty of room! We are sent to invite the guests,

and are directed to "compel them to come in." We would therefore invite, exhort, expostulate, warn, persuade, and command, with all tenderness and authority, and not take a denial. Blame not, I beseech you, our earnestness; be not disgusted or offended with our importunity; do not pray us to have you excused; do not overwhelm us with discouragement, and send us to give, with tears, an account of our ill success. Our love to your immortal souls; our longing after your everlasting happiness, constrain us to be thus troublesome and importunate. Nay, though you frown, insult, threaten and persecute, we must persist so long as there is the shadow of a hope. "We must not be overcome of evil, "but overcome evil with good." And at last, "if "ye will not hear, we must weep in secret places for "your pride," after his example, who wept over ungrateful Jerusalem.

To the true believer, careless sinners appear like intoxicated persons in a house which is on fire; who must be consumed in the flames, unless they can be induced to come forth, though themselves are utterly insensible of the danger. You may think yourselves secure, and make yourselves merry with our fears: but your awful infatuation, and imminent danger, are so manifest to us, that we must persist in our endeavours to convince you, so long as you are on this side of everlasting burnings. Thus Noah was treated by the inhabitants of the old world, and Lot even by his sons-in-law, with neglect and contempt, when they warned them of their danger; but too late they found their warnings true: and so will you find our's when death and judgment come, should you

now slight them. "Because I called, and ye refus-
"ed; I stretched out my hand, and no man regard-
"ed; I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock
"when your fear cometh†," saith the Lord himself.
—But I would rise superior to such discouraging apprehensions, and expect better success in this feeble attempt to call sinners to repentance: humbly hoping that God will hear my prayers, and employ this discourse as his instrument in that blessed work.

When John the Baptist began his ministry, he preached; "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven
"is at hand." The blessed Jesus also began to preach; "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is
"at hand." "And the apostles went forth, and
"preached that men should repent." After the resurrection of Christ, they were commissioned to
"preach repentance and forgiveness of sins to all
"nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Accordingly, Peter preached to the Jews, "Repent ye, and be
"converted, that your sins may be blotted out."
Paul in like manner addressed the Gentiles; "God
"commandeth all men every where, to repent;"
and informed them, "that men should repent, and
"turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."

From these, and many other testimonies of the word of God, judge ye, beloved, of the importance and certainty of our subject. No matter of trivial concern which may safely be disregarded, or of doubtful disputation which may plausibly be gainsayed or questioned, now demands our attention. But a subject of equal evidence with the word of

† Prov. i. 24—26.

"God who cannot lie," and of importance proportioned to the interests of eternal ages.

Hear me then, I beseech you, with candour and attention: lay aside prejudice and levity, whilst with all seriousness and plainness, I discourse concerning, 1. The necessity of repentance. 2. The nature of repentance. 3. The encouragement given to repentance. 4. The proper season for repentance: and 5. The means to be used in repenting.—For the love of thy soul, I beseech thee, sinner: and as thou wilt answer it at the day of judgment, I charge it upon thy conscience, to lay this matter home to thy heart, as in the sight of God; at the same time beseeching him to make thee partaker "of that repentance, "which is unto salvation, not to be repented of."

PART I.

CONCERNING THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE.

BEFORE we enter more fully upon the subject, I would premise, that I choose the word *Necessity*, as the most comprehensive which occurs to my mind: and I would be understood to intend by 'the necessi-'ty of repentance:' 1. The urgency of the case: sinners must either repent or perish: 2. The reasonableness of repentance: having done wrong we ought to repent, and act most unreasonably if we do not: 3. The obligation sinners are under to repent, both from this reasonableness of the injunction, and the authority of that God who enjoins it: and 4. The additional guilt contracted by impenitency. As the same arguments frequently prove the necessity of repentance in more than one of these senses, I thought it would better prevent needless repetition, and obscurity in point of method to treat of the whole at once, than to divide them into different heads. Having thus stated the meaning of the term employed, to prevent ambiguity, and that all may know what we say and whereof we affirm, let us proceed to the proof.

And here, reader, I have no need to inquire into thy character, whether thou art moral or immoral, a

sober man or a drunkard, a good or bad relation or member of society, a formal worshipper or profane. Granting all that any man can desire, supposing the character of the reader to be decent, amiable, and respectable amongst men, I will endeavour to show him, and to show all, their need of repentance.

I. "Because all have sinned, and come short of "the glory of God."—Few in comparison are acquainted with the extent, strictness, and spirituality of the law of God, as taking cognizance of every thought, word, action, intention, or disposition of the whole heart and life; requiring absolute perfection in all things, continued even to the last moment of life. Few keep an exact account of their own thoughts, words, and actions, with reference to this law, as the standard of duty and sin: consequently few are sensible in any tolerable degree, how numerous, or rather how innumerable their transgressions are. But most, or all know, that in some instances they have offended God, by doing those actions which he hath forbidden, and leaving undone those which he hath commanded. Surely, reader, thy conscience will excuse me from further evincing this particular. Only listen to this faithful monitor: even now it arraigns, accuses, and condemns thee: and wert thou guilty only of one transgression, (instead of those millions, which are noted in God's book of remembrance,) and shouldest thou die without repenting of that one sin: as surely as conscience now condemns thee, so surely will God condemn thee in that solemn day, "when he shall judge the secrets of men by "Jesus Christ." "For if our heart condemn us, God "is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."

One felony or murder fully proved ensures condemnation, equally with ten thousand. "Therefore, by the works of the law shall no flesh be "justified in the sight of God;" because all have sinned: "And by the law is the knowledge of sin." It takes cognizance of, and condemns every sin and every sinner; and consequently can justify none who have once transgressed. But remember, that the number and heinousness of our transgressions, though they add nothing to the *certainty*, yet will add proportionably to the *greatness* of the merited condemnation; and should add to the depth of our repentance. Could that man be found who had once, and but once, and in the smallest instance, failed of obedience, he would need repentance, it would be his duty, nor could he be saved in impenitence. How needful then repentance for him, whose sins exceed in number the hairs of his head, and equal the moments of his life! For him, whose crimes are full of aggravation, and loudly cry for vengeance!

II. The law we have broken is "holy, just, and "good."—There are laws in this land, which condemn the murderer and house-breaker to death. These are reasonable laws, of which none can disapprove, but those who are, or would be guilty of those crimes. We experience them to be the security of our persons, property, and repose. He who breaks these laws, is not only condemned by *them*, but in the judgment of every wise and honest man; and ought in reason to condemn himself like the penitent thief, allowing the justice of the punishment he suffers‡.

‡ Luke xxiii. 41.

But Nebuchadnezzar made a law, commanding all his officers and servants to worship a golden image, on penalty of being cast into a furnace of fire: Darius made a law, forbidding any of his subjects to worship God for thirty days, on pain of being cast into the den of lions: and many such laws have the tyranny, caprice, and pride of imperious princes and rulers produced. They are, however, evidently absurd and impious, and every man will abhor them in proportion to his wisdom and goodness. The three pious Jews who broke Nebuchadnezzar's edict, and Daniel who transgressed that of Darius, were indeed condemned by the laws; but they have been admired for their courage and constancy in *disobedience*, by all good men ever since. Nay, the very consciences of their enemies testified for them, that they had done nothing amiss. Nor would it have been right for them to have condemned themselves, but rather they might glory in serving God and keeping a good conscience in the face of danger and death.

Were the law of God in any degree like those oppressive edicts, we should have cause to be extremely grieved at the hardship put upon us, and alarmed at the sentence denounced against us: but we could not with any propriety condemn ourselves, or repent of our transgressions.

We ought not indeed to reply against God: but the absurdity of this presumption arises not so much from the consideration of his irresistible power and uncontroulable sovereignty, as from that of the absolute perfection of his justice and holiness. This we are bound humbly to allow and suppose, even when

we cannot perceive it; and to silence all our rising objections by saying, "Shall not the Judge of all the "earth do right?" Yet God condescended himself to argue the matter with those who thought his ways unequal: he even proposes his conduct in his own government of the world to our consideration, that we may see and adore his justice; and to our imitation, that we may be holy as he is holy: and the day of judgment will clear up all our difficulties, when the righteousness of God will be fully demonstrated, to the universal satisfaction of his holy creatures, and the confusion and silence of all his enemies. It is indeed blasphemy, to suppose God's law unreasonable, and his government oppressive: but it is a blasphemy congenial to our depraved nature, of which in our hearts we are all guilty, and of which we are with difficulty cured; "for the carnal mind is enmity "against God,—is not subject to the law of God, "neither indeed can be."

As, therefore, no sinner can be truly penitent till he is convinced that the law of God is holy, just, and good; we should first establish this point, in endeavouring to bring sinners to repentance. This is the apostolical method: St. Paul, arguing in the epistle to the Romans against justification by the law; aware of the false conclusions men of corrupt minds would be ready to draw from his reasonings; again and again purposely leaves his main subject, to assert and prove the goodness of the law notwithstanding. With one accord, also, do all the writers of the sacred volume speak honourably of the *moral* law, expressing their approbation of it, and delight in it; nor is there one exception to this rule. This

may show us the great importance of this part of the subject: and how dangerous some inconsiderate expressions are, into which several good men have been betrayed, in their zeal for that *fundamental doctrine, justification by faith alone.*

We may be sure that the law is holy, just, and good; because given by a holy, just, and good God, whose work is perfect: and because after Adam's fall, when it became *morally* impracticable for any of his posterity to be justified by it; he is still pleased to continue them under it, judge them according to it, and condemn them to utter destruction† for breaking it. "Is there unrighteousness with God?" He would not do these things, if they were not perfectly just. If they appear unjust to us, it is owing

† All who die in unbelief, perish for breaking this law: all who are saved, were thus condemned for breaking it; else why did Christ bear their sins for them? Some indeed talk of another and milder law; but where is it found, when promulgated, what it requires, who does keep it, or who is condemned for breaking it, hath never been nor ever can be determined. Others express themselves very ambiguously about our obligations to keep the law, prior to the consideration of redemption. But where there is no law, there can be no transgression; where there is no transgression, there can be no condemnation; and where no condemnation, no occasion for redemption. Thus we repeal the law, and subvert the Gospel. Surely we ought with precision to determine this matter: and to show that man, as God's creature, is bound to obey his law; that sin is the transgression of the law; that the wages of sin is death; that Christ died (not for Adam's sin only, or mainly, but) for our transgressions of the law: that they who perish, are condemned (not only or principally because Adam sinned, but) for their own sins; that upon believing in Christ, we are delivered from the condemnation of sinners, but are never released from the obedience we owe as creatures; and that the obligation to obey is enforced on us by most powerful additional motives taken from redemption.

to our ignorance, self-love, low thoughts of God, and favourable thoughts of sin. Nay, so far was God from repealing this law, or abating its strictness, after man's transgression, that he republished it from mount Sinai with awful majesty: he requires every one who would escape condemnation at the day of judgment, to condemn himself now for his transgressions of it, and to seek forgiveness from his sovereign mercy: Nor would he even thus pardon one sinner except as his own Son honoured the law in our stead, by his perfect obedience and death upon the cross. Moreover he gives it into the hand of all believers as a rule of life, a standard of sin and holiness; yea, writes it in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. Thus doth the most high God proclaim to the whole world his determination "to magnify the "law and make it honourable." And had we no other evidence of its excellency; this being abundantly sufficient, ought fully to satisfy us; yea, to humble us in the dust for acting so unreasonably as to break it.

May we not, however, ourselves discern the reasonableness of it, notwithstanding our partiality in our own cause, and our love of sin? God is evidently the Perfection of glory and beauty†, the Pattern and Fountain of loveliness; from whom all that is lovely in all creatures is an emanation, of whom it is a faint resemblance, which hath comparatively "no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth." In himself he is, therefore, worthy of all admiration, love, and worship. From him we derive our exist-

† Psalm l. 2. Out of Zion, the PERFECTION OF BEAUTY, GOD hath shined.

ence, and all that rendereth our existence comfortable: our obligations, therefore, to him, as our Creator and Benefactor, are immense; he deserves, then, our entire and unreserved gratitude. Infinite love and gratitude, though he is worthy of them, his law requires not, because we are not capable of them. Nor doth it enjoin the love and service of an angel; because he hath not endowed us with angelic capacities. The law runs thus: "Thou shalt love the "Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and mind, and "soul, and strength:" its requirements are proportioned, not to his worthiness, but to our capacities. Of this love the man of the slenderest abilities is equally capable with the sublimest genius; the infant as the aged. In proportion to the superiority or inferiority of capacity, more or less is required: if it be honestly *our all*, the law demands no more.

But the law makes no allowance for our disinclination and indisposition to love and serve God with *our all;* because this is that very malignity of heart which renders us abominable in his sight. Every degree of this temper is a degree of enmity to God; the very disposition arises from pride, love of the world, and love of sin; and in proportion as it prevails, is contempt of God, in comparison with the world, sin, and self. It is, therefore, in itself infinitely unreasonable, totally inexcusable, and the very temper of the devil; who is completely detestable, because completely of this abominable disposition†. When we, therefore, show that the law is holy,

† This disposition is properly original sin, the effect of Adam's transgression. Therefore he, as the root, and we in him as the branches, lost God's favour and image, and became liable to and

just, and good, because exactly level to our capacities, we mean our *natural powers*, not our *moral dispositions:* the want of the former proportionably excuses; the want of the latter proportionably aggravates, every failure of any given degree of service. Man, not having the powers of an angel, is excusable in not performing the services of an angel: but

fit for destruction. That this disposition is propagated by natural generation cannot reasonably be denied: that it is properly the punishment of Adam's sin, seems capable of Scriptural proof. If we cannot clearly perceive the justice of this, we must silence our objections thus: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" True penitents read their own character, and see their own picture in Adam's conduct, and are humbled for original sin, as the fountain of all their actual transgressions. But as it is always either disputed, neglected, or abused, until the heart be otherwise humbled, I did not think it proper particularly to insist upon it in this discourse. Whilst some appear to lay an undue stress on Adam's transgression, and speak as if it were the only sin for which we were condemned, or Christ died: others totally deny, and revile the doctrine of the fall; contending that man now is just such a creature, with respect to his moral character and dispositions, as God originally created him. But the apostle Paul more than intimates that the image of God consists in righteousness and true holiness. Now we know that God created man in his own IMAGE: he also made him upright, and pronounced him very good. The question therefore is, what man now is? If experience and observation prove him to be naturally and universally prone to evil, and averse from good; and if the Scripture pronounce him evil and abominable, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart to be only evil continually: he must be fallen from what he was originally. Ingratitude, enmity to God, pride, ambition, envy, malice, lust, falsehood, and covetousness, can form no part of the image of a holy God, or of that uprightness in which man was first made. But he must be very hardy, who should deny them to form a part of man's present character. Nor can we suppose the God of truth would first pronounce man very good, and afterwards, without any intervening change, so often declare him altogether abominable,

being of an unholy disposition, he is, therefore, the more inexcusable in any particular act of unholiness; seeing it appears that it was no inadvertency, but the rooted disposition of his heart.

To love and serve God with our all, is the substance of the requirements of the law in the first table. And what can be more reasonable? Can there be any difficulty in loving one so lovely, being thankful to such a Friend, or serving such a Master, except what arises from the inexcusable badness of our hearts? For this we are condemned; for this we ought to condemn ourselves, "abhor ourselves, and "repent in dust and ashes."

To love all men with equal estimation and benevolence, is the substance of the second table: and we need only suppose this law given to our neighbours alone, as the rule of their conduct towards us, in order to perceive its excellency. What lovely, happy creatures should we be, and what a delightful world would this prove, were all perfectly obedient! None is or can be miserable but the transgressor, or they whom transgressors injure. How excellent then this law, which provides for the happiness of the world so completely, that by transgression alone could men become in any degree miserable! Ought we not then to repent of our disobedience, our continual

How much more does it become our narrow capacities, and proneness to mistake, to rest satisfied with the Scriptural accounts; "By "one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin," "by one "man's disobedience many were made sinners;" and to adore the depths we cannot fathom: than in the pride of philosophy and metaphysics, with such scanty information, to decide upon what we cannot comprehend, and with daring temerity to utter such words, as more than seem to be injurious to the divine character.

disobedience, and especially of our entire depravity of disposition, which renders us *morally* incapable of obedience?

Let every precept be impartially examined, and these things will appear with still more convincing evidence. For instance: "Remember the sabbath-"day, to keep it holy." Is it not highly reasonable that we should devote this portion of our time to him, to whom the whole belongs? Would not our best interests, in connexion with the glory of God, be promoted by obeying this commandment? "These "things he commands us for our good." How unreasonable then our disobedience! What need have we to repent of forgetting and neglecting to hallow the sabbath!

Again, "whatsoever ye would that men should do "unto you, do ye even so unto them." As we all judge it reasonable that others should thus behave to us; let conscience determine, whether we have not done wrong in, and ought not to repent of, transgressing this rule in our conduct to others. We might easily examine other precepts, and show them to be equally reasonable. Yea, every one of them is so; and therefore every deviation from perfect obedience is entirely unreasonable. There is nothing in the whole law of God grievous in itself; or difficult, except to our proud and carnal hearts.—David and Paul, men after God's own heart, greatly loved and delighted in God's law: Christ being perfectly holy, entirely delighted in it, and perfectly obeyed it: angels and saints in glory, enjoy full liberty in obeying it, and find it perfect felicity: yea, God himself, though absolute Sovereign, is pleased

to observe in his own conduct, the same rules he prescribes for our's, (as far as consists with his majesty and authority;) his law is the transcript of his own holiness; and when he requires our obedience, he only says, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." In proportion as we bear his image, we take pleasure in his precepts, and find obedience easy and natural: in proportion as we resemble Satan, we hate the law, and find obedience irksome, arduous, impossible. How excellent then this law; how vile are we who have broken it! What need have we to repent of our unreasonable conduct!

III. All have need to repent, because all have by sin absolutely destroyed themselves.—A trifling penalty incurred by transgression, might reasonably have been disregarded. When human laws only inflict small fines, short imprisonment, or burning in the hand, offenders may treat such penalties with indifference: but when excruciating tortures, and ignominious death, are the threatened punishment; when the sentence is impartially and rigorously inflicted; when the crime is fully proved, and the prisoner closely confined; the most stubborn spirit bends, the stoutest heart is intimidated, and indifference is madness.—Art thou then, sinner, careless and unconcerned in a case infinitely more tremendous? Canst thou find a heart for gay amusements, or coolly apply to worldly pursuits, whilst the wrath of God abideth upon thee, the law thunders out a dreadful curse against thee; death closely pursues thee; everlasting misery awaits thee? That God whom thou hast offended, is at once the Witness, Judge, and Avenger of thy crimes: thou canst not

hide thy transgressions from his all-seeing eye: thou canst not flee from his omnipresence, resist his almighty power, bribe his inflexible justice, or endure his awful vengeance. The sentence, if thou die impenitent, is already published in the Judge's own words: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Are not these words of the loving Saviour most dreadful? Can thy hands "be strong, or can thy heart endure," when they shall sound in thy affrighted ear? Is this "the wrath to come," surely, inevitably to come, upon an ungodly world? Are they his words who saith, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away?" Art thou one of the very persons concerned? Art thou a transgressor of the law? Doth the word of God run thus, "Cursed is every one, who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them?" And dost thou still remain unconcerned? Indeed, were there no way of escape, it would not be worth while to torment thyself before the time. "But there is forgiveness with God," there is a space allowed for repentance, a way of salvation, a proclamation of mercy: and dost thou still trifle, and not apply thyself immediately to seek deliverance from the wrath to come?

Surely these considerations, if laid to heart in a manner suitable to their certainty and importance, would damp the vain mirth of an ungodly world, and turn their songs and laughter into bitter lamentations. Let me, my fellow-sinners, recommend the apostle's advice to you: "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourn-

" ing and your joy to heaviness†." Thus shall your godly sorrow for sin, " work repentance unto salva- " tion not to be repented of."

IV. The necessity of repentance appears from the justice of this sentence, severe as it may seem. Sinners are ready to say ' I only gratify my natural inclinations, and enjoy a little irregular pleasure for a few years; and can it consist with the justice and goodness of God to punish me with everlasting misery? Is there any proportion between the crime and the punishment?' But consider, poor deluded man, the infinite majesty, purity, and goodness of that God, against whom thy sins are committed: consider that " his is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, " for ever:" consider thy relations to him, as his creature, his property, his subject; and the reasonableness of his claim to thy love and obedience, resulting both from his own excellency and authority, and the benefits he hath conferred on thee: consider the reasonableness of his law, the pleasantness of his service, the happiness of his subjects, and the noble rewards of obedience: then estimate, if thou art able, what injustice, ingratitude, rebellion, contempt, enmity, and obstinacy, there is in sin, and what punishment is adequate to its deservings.

If a man injure his equal, it is evil; if he injure his superior, it is worse. If a child curse, smite, or murder his parent, his conduct is baser than it would have been, had he thus treated a stranger or an equal. The wiser, better, and more indulgent the parent, the more atrocious is the crime of the unna-

† James, iv. 9.

tural, ungrateful child. Should a son murder an excellent parent, in the midst of a recent profusion of kindness, without any provocation or motive, except in order to the more unrestrained gratification of some vile passion, what punishment should we deem too severe for the parricide? Add, further, the relation of sovereign to that of parent; a rightful, wise, just, clement sovereign, the common father of his people. For a persecuted David to stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed, though a cruel treacherous Saul, would have been highly criminal: how much more to murder a prince of consummate excellency, without the least provocation! for his favourite on whom his bounty had been lavished, to be the assassin! But for his son, his indulged son, to break through all obligations, human and divine, and murder his father and prince at once, that he might more unrestrainedly indulge his lusts, would stamp the act with stupendous baseness! When Absalom designed to act this monstrous part against the man after God's own heart, even the ill-judged lenity of the too indulgent parent was not permitted to rescue the traitor from deserved punishment.—According to the plainest dictates of human reason, the malignity of the action must rise in proportion to the authority and excellency of the party offended, and the offender's relations and obligations to him. In human affairs, this method of computing the comparative criminality of offences, and proportioning punishments, is generally adopted amongst civilized nations. If we are allowed to compute in the same method *the evil of sin*, (and why should we not?) what heart can conceive, or tongue express, or numbers

reach the evil of every offence committed against the majesty of God! By arguments and meditations of this kind, we may arrive at some feeble conception of the odiousness of transgressing the divine law: but he alone, who sees all things exactly as they are, is the competent Judge: and my design is not to demonstrate a matter before doubtful, but to illustrate the reasonableness of that which is certainly true. Whether we see and allow it, or not, sin is infinitely evil, and deserving of eternal punishment. Thus he hath determined, "whose judgment we know "to be according unto truth." All his loyal subjects on earth join in praising him "as righteous "in his ways and holy in his works." All the inhabitants of heaven thus praise him, even while "the "smoke of the torments of the wicked ascendeth "up for ever and ever." None but rebels think the sentence too severe. If we would not have our lot with *them* in another world, let us not rank ourselves among them in this, but let us say, with holy Job, "I have uttered things which I under-"stood not: things too wonderful for me, which I "knew not." "I will lay my hand upon my mouth. "Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, "twice, but I will proceed no further." Yea, truly "every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world "shall appear guilty before God;" nay, they "shall "be speechless" when ordered to be cast "into "outer darkness, where is weeping, wailing, and "gnashing of teeth."—What cause then have all to repent, who have justly merited so dreadful a punishment?

V. All have cause of, and need for repentance;

because God will most certainly inflict this punishment upon all the impenitent with unabating severity. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Let no man deceive you with vain words: the impenitent sinner shall certainly spend eternity in the "lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." An awakening truth, which Satan and his instruments have in all ages been opposing; but in none more zealously, ingeniously, and, alas! successfully, than in this: for that great deceiver knows that nothing so effectually increases the number of the damned, as the disbelief of eternal damnation.—"Ye shall not surely die," was the first temptation of this murderer of souls: and still his kingdom is supported by the same insinuation. But if there be any meaning in words, if the idea of eternal misery can be conveyed in human language, and if the Bible be the word of God, then the wicked "shall go "into EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT." Though God be rich in mercy, though there be plenteous redemption in the blood of Christ; yet neither the mercy of God, nor the blood of Christ, avail for any but the penitent: to others, all the threatenings of the law alone belong: nor have they any part or lot in the Gospel; except the deeper condemnation of neglecting such great salvation, and abusing the mercy of God, and the redemption of Christ, into an encouragement to continue in sin. Such sinners "are a people who have no understanding, therefore "he that made them will have no mercy on them." "Oh consider this, ye that forget God, lest he "tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver§."

§ Psalm, i. 22.

VI. The necessity of repentance is further evinced, by considering the reasonableness of this awful determination. There is a controversy betwixt God, and sinners, and blame must rest somewhere. Either God is indeed chargeable with blame for enacting so strict a law, and annexing so dreadful a penalty on transgressors; or the sinner is as much to blame as this penalty implies, for breaking the law. To harbour one moment the supposition that any part of the blame belongs to God, is blasphemous; doubtless the whole fault belongs to the sinner. Yet every impenitent sinner in excusing himself, condemns God. "Wilt thou," saith he to Job, "dis-"annul my judgment?" "Wilt thou condemn me "that thou mayest be righteous‡?" Why did the sinner break the law, if he did not think it too strict? Doth he *pretend* it was by surprise, or sudden temptation, through inadvertency, and not deliberate rebellion§? Then why doth he not repent? His impenitence for the past, and his present continuance in transgression, strongly imply a most injurious censure of the law, as inconsistent with his happiness: and his vindication of himself and his conduct, implies a censure on the justice of God in condemning sinners, equally injurious.

Now should God pardon a sinner who thus excuses

‡ Job, xl. 8.

§ This is often the case of the true believer, who delights in the law of God, and hates evil, yet is surprised into the commission of that which he abhors, and breaks the law he loves; but recovering from the surprise, he directly and deeply repents. But this excuse is merely a pretence in others by which they cover a rooted enmity to the law, and habitual love of sin; and their impenitence discovers their hypocrisy.

himself, and tacitly condemns him, he would seem to allow the excuse, and plead guilty to the charge; so that the honour of God and the salvation of an impenitent sinner, are irreconcileable contradictions: but God, conscious of his own most perfect justice, and jealous of his own glory, would sooner leave all the world to perish for ever, than thus consent to his own dishonour.—Every hope which any man entertains of pardon in impenitency, involves the absurd supposition, when carefully investigated, that God will dishonour himself, to humour and favour a proud obstinate rebel. Every such hope is pregnant with the presumption spoken of by Moses. "Lest there be among you a root that beareth gall "and wormwood; and it come to pass, when he "heareth the words of this curse, that he bless him-"self in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though "I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add "drunkenness to thirst. The Lord will not spare "him, but then the anger of the Lord, and his jeal-"ousy shall smoke against that man; and all the "curses that are written in this book shall lie upon "him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from un-"der heaven§." Let us, beloved, attend carefully to such plain warnings of the word of God, that we may be armed against the temptations of Satan, and the rising presumption of our own hearts.

VII. The necessity of repentance is further manifested by reflecting, that no impenitent sinner can cordially approve of the salvation revealed in the word of God. Indeed, did the Gospel require men confidently to believe that *their* sins are already par-

§ Deut. xxix. 18—20.

doned, and that all the blessings of salvation are already their's, though they are destitute of every gracious disposition, as some have incautiously advanced: no scheme could better suit the pride and carnality of an impenitent heart. This, however, is not the true Gospel of Christ, but another Gospel, which must be opposed, even though preached by an angel from heaven. All are bound to believe that God will forgive the vilest of sinners, who repent and believe in Christ: otherwise they make God a liar; for he hath attested it. When by scriptural evidence, (even by holy dispositions produced, and holy actions performed,) I am sure that *my* faith is living, and *my* repentance genuine, I may be humbly sure, that *my* sins are forgiven, and that I am a child of God and an heir of glory; but not before. That I shall be welcome if I come aright, I may be sure before I come: that I have come aright, and am accepted, I can only be assured by the effects I am conscious of, and the fruits of righteousness produced.

The way in which forgiveness and salvation are actually conferred upon sinners, may be thus illustrated. A state-criminal, under sentence of death, is thus addressed by his prince: 'You deserve to suffer the rigour of your sentence; no excuse can be made for your rebellion, nor one alleviating circumstance found in your case: yet, by my own clemency, I am disposed to show mercy, so that I may but do it honourably; and so as effectually to express my disapprobation of your crime for an example to others. I will, therefore, seat myself upon my royal throne, surrounded by my nobles, and multitudes of my subjects, as witnesses of your submission and

my clemency. Do you then approach and prostrate yourself in my presence, publicly and humbly confess your guilt, acknowledge you justly merit to be immediately led to execution, then throw yourself upon my royal mercy, and crave your life at my hands. In this humbling method, and in no other, will I forgive your crimes, and become your friend.' —I speak not here of that redemption-price which Immanuel paid that "God might be just and the "justifier of him who believeth:" but merely of the glory of God's justice in our condemnation, and of his mercy in our salvation; which he requires to be unreservedly and cordially acknowledged by every one, who comes to him for pardon.

But an impenitent sinner always rejects, and generally is affronted, with this preliminary of peace and reconciliation. He stands upon his vindication, and holds fast his pleas and excuses. If he allow that he hath his faults, he insists that he hath his virtues, and expects that they should be accepted by way of compensation. He hopes also to do something more by way of atoning for his faults; and thinks it would be hard, and indeed palpably unjust, to send him, with all his imagined good qualities, sincere obedience, and good intentions, to keep company with thieves, murderers, and prostitutes in the bottomless pit. Such, indeed, is the self-love, and self-partiality of mankind, that you shall find few, if any, even of the vilest characters, who have not something of this kind to plead in arrest of judgment: every man's own faults seem to himself more venial than those of other men, and his supposed good qualities and actions more estimable; and thus the

sinner, "flatters himself in his own eyes, until his "iniquity be found to be hateful." But especially, this is the grand objection of the rich, the moral, and the pharisaical. These would bid high and do much, yea, almost any thing but this, which is so intolerably mortifying to their self-preference. On this ground principally, numbers reject the Gospel, part from Christ, and come short of salvation: as "there is no difference; for all have sinned," all are condemned, none can make satisfaction; all then that are saved must condemn themselves, and submit to be saved by grace alone through faith in the Son of God. But whilst such persons proudly hesitate and object, the publicans and harlots, being brought to true repentance, approve of this humbling method, and enter into the kingdom of heaven before them.

VIII. Without repentance there can be no preparation of heart for that "holiness, without which no "man can see the Lord." All true Christians are zealous of good works, being taught by "the grace "of God, which bringeth salvation, to deny ungod-"liness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, right-"eously, and godly, in this present world." The christian, indeed, is very far from perfection in good works, and therefore he cannot be justified by them; neither does he at all depend on them: but by his sincere obedience, his unreserved attention to Christ's commands, he proves that he is a true believer and no hypocrite, he glorifies God, adorns the Gospel, and promotes the real good of mankind.

But by deep repentance alone is the heart prepared for such a holy conduct. Without this there

can be no "ceasing to do evil, or learning to do "well;" no "hating the evil, and loving the good;" no "abhorring the evil, or cleaving to that which is "good." Without repentance we cannot really love God, desire his glory, reverence his majesty, or delight in his law and service. Mere moral and relative good behaviour in the world, without any due regard to God; or mere external performances in religion, may subsist without repentance: but that holiness, which respects the authority of God, as Law-giver and Judge, which springs from love of him and his commandments, and is intentionally directed to his glory, can only be produced from a heart renewed unto repentance.

Especially that deep sense of personal unworthiness, which is peculiar to the true penitent, prepares the heart to exercise genuine gratitude, contentment, patience, meekness, forgiveness of injuries, and love of enemies. These dispositions and duties form a very conspicuous part of the christian character as delineated in the sacred scriptures: but no impenitent man can really exercise these graces or perform these duties, whatever appearances he may occasionally assume. Yet if this be not our character and conduct, our hope is mere presumption, and our profession hypocrisy: "for if ye for-"give not men their trespasses, neither will your "heavenly Father forgive your trespasses." So that without repentance no man can serve God here, or be saved in the world to come.

Lastly. Without repentance, there can be no meetness for heaven. Without a correspondent disposition, without an appetite prepared for the object, there

can be no gratification. A holy heart relishes and delights in holiness, and is thus prepared for the enjoyment of a holy heaven. But he who despises, and disrelishes holiness in this world, could find no happiness in that place, where all the joys are holy, and where consequently all the employments would be irksome to him. No impenitent sinner has this "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light:" because he cannot relish and delight in holiness: for as soon as he becomes of this disposition, he must in proportion abhor unholiness, and abhor himself for his sinfulness; that is to say, he must repent of his sins.

The whole company of the redeemed are likewise represented, as joining in cordial and unreserved praises unto God and the Lamb: giving all the glory of their salvation to the rich mercy of the Father, and the precious blood of the Saviour. These praises imply an acknowledgment of the justice of the sentence executed upon the ungodly: nay, they imply that *they* themselves might justly, and should certainly have perished with their fellow rebels, had not Jesus interposed with his atoning blood. But could any impenitent sinner join this worship with sincere delight? Many openly arraign the conduct of the Judge in dooming sinners to eternal misery: and every impenitent heart is disposed to quarrel with this part of the divine conduct. Nor would the case be different, were it possible for a person of this description to enter into heaven: he would secretly condemn his Maker for severity, in eternally punishing others for the very crimes he himself had committed, and never repented of: he must dissent from those praises in his heart, which arise from a principle he allows not:

namely, that distinguishing grace and atoning blood have made all the difference betwixt him and those in hell: he could not in sincerity allow, that God would have been glorious, though he had left him to perish. But there is neither hypocrisy, nor discordant voice, nor unholiness, in those happy mansions: therefore no impenitent sinner shall ever enter into them.

Because our self-love renders us so unwilling to believe this important truth; because Satan with such artifice, endeavours to draw off our attention from it; because we are so reluctant of ourselves duly to consider it; and because the entangling pursuits and interests, the pleasures, maxims, and examples of the world, have such a tendency to lull us into a fatal security in this respect; I have the more importunately laboured these multiplied demonstrations of the necessity of repentance. Surely, sinner, I have gained my point, fixed thy attention, and fully convinced thee that thou hast cause to repent, oughtest to repent, and must either repent or perish. Surely, thy heart is by this time in some measure suitably affected with the important subject; and thou art even now, with pressing anxiety, inquiring, "What then is repent-"ance?" Beseeching the Lord to assist and bless the attempt, I shall endeavour with all possible seriousness and plainness, to satisfy this inquiry.

PART II.

THE NATURE OF REPENTANCE.

I SHALL not spend my time in critically inquiring into the etymology, or the meaning of the words, which we translate repentance in our version of the Bible. Suffice it to observe that *metameleomai*, one word frequently used, signifies to *be afterwards careful or uneasy;* and *metanoia*, that more commonly used, signifies a *change of mind*, of judgment, and disposition; which ideas severally and conjunctly express the nature of repentance, as it may more fully be learned from the general tenour of the scriptures. I would then define true repentance to be 'A genuine sorrow for sin, attended with a real inclination to undo, if it were possible, all we have sinfully done; and consequently an endeavour, as far as we have it in our power, to counteract the consequences of our former evil conduct; with a determination of mind, through divine grace, to walk for the future in newness of life, evidenced to be sincere by fruits meet for repentance; that is, by all holy dispositions, words, and actions.' Enlarging on this definition, I shall have an opportunity of expressing my sentiments on the nature of real repentance, and distinguishing it from various counterfeits.

I. Repentance comprehends 'a *genuine* sorrow 'for sin.' This implies that there is a *spurious* sorrow on account of sin, which a man may have to excess without real repentance. This kind of sorrow arises from self-love, alarmed with the fear of punishment, without regard to the just desert of it. A man is indeed grieved; yet not that he hath sinned. but that God exceedingly hates sin, is determined to punish it, and is able to execute this determination in spite of all opposition. He is extremely sorry that the law is so very strict, and greatly terrified when he reflects on the danger to which he stands exposed: but he is not grieved at heart for the odious ungrateful part he hath acted.—In human affairs, many under condemnation of death, appear thus penitent, whose insincerity is detected by a pardon, and they rush upon the commission of new crimes. Many penitents of this description we meet with on sick beds, or in circumstances of imminent danger: they are under excessive terrors, shed abundance of tears, and make many fair promises; but when the alarm is over, their repentance is repented of, and their concern lost in company and worldly pursuits. They likewise abound among the hearers of the Gospel. Like Felix, when the word of God is brought home to their consciences, they tremble and perhaps weep: but they are soon quieted, and return to the pursuit of their worldly interests and pleasures with unabated alacrity: many of these embrace false and loose schemes of religion, are buoyed up with presumptuous hopes, and *practically* say, "let us sin on, that grace may "abound." Having got over their alarm, their re-

pentance is finished; they live without remorse for the past, or tenderness of conscience for the present, nor have they any trouble in general about their sins; except perchance some outrage to common decency shame them before their fellow-sinners.

These transient alarms and convictions, are most effectually made use of by Satan, to keep men from true repentance. A general persuasion prevails, that we ought to repent, though few understand the real nature of repentance. However, this general persuasion, frequently excites, from time to time, considerable uneasiness of conscience, to him who considers himself impenitent. But when men falsely imagine they have repented, or do repent, this uneasiness ceases, and they continue impenitent with a quiet mind.

Let me here intreat the reader to pause, and put a few questions on the subject to himself.—'Has it 'not been thus with me? Is it not so to this hour? 'Do I not keep my conscience from reproaching 'me, or silence its friendly admonitions, by some 'general apprehension, that I am at times a peni-'tent?'—I beseech thee leave not this consideration till thou hast carefully examined it, as in the sight of God, and with the day of judgment before thine eyes. Most certain it is, that multitudes live all their lives in a continual course of sinning and repenting *in this way;* and at length die impenitent.

But a man may be *really* sorry for particular sins, without being a true penitent. Conscience sometimes so reproaches men for certain enormous violation of all laws, human and divine, as to render them a terror to themselves: yea, they are exceed-

ingly sorry that they ever committed those particular crimes, and would gladly undo them were it possible: and yet this hath nothing in it of the nature of true repentance. Thus Judas repented of betraying Christ, confessing his guilt, making restitution, and even seeking to prevent the consequences of his base treachery: yea, he was so stung with remorse, that he could not live under the anguish, but became his own executioner. Yet he was not a true penitent; for the Lord assures us, "It had "been good for that man had he never been born:" and we do not find that he ever expressed the least remorse for his hypocrisy, his covetousness, or his other wickedness of heart and life, in which he had continued all his days. The case is often the same with murderers, who are unspeakably troubled for one act of violence to a fellow-creature; but not in the least concerned for all the contempt, ingratitude, and enmity, of which they have been guilty towards God. And the same is observable in respect of many other notorious offenders.—This sorrow is not excited by a conviction, (resulting from knowledge and reflection,) of deep criminality in having sinned heinously, by disobeying a good God, and breaking a good law; but it arises from the horror of having done violence to natural light and their own consciences, to that degree, that none of their former *excuses and pretences* can pacify them: God having preserved thus much of himself, and of his law, in our reason and conscience, as a check upon natural depravity, and to bridle the headstrong corruptions of those, who neither fear him, nor regard men;

yet cannot act out all their evil purposes without becoming their own tormentors.

But the sorrow of a true penitent is *for sin;* as committed against God, being rebellion against his rightful authority, and transgression of his holy law. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done "this evil in thy sight‡." He mourns after a godly sort, with a godly sorrow, or a sorrow which directly regards God§. His sorrow springs from the consideration of the majesty, purity, and excellency of that glorious Being whom he hath offended; the reasonableness of the law which he hath transgressed, the obligations to obedience which he hath violated, the injustice and ingratitude of which he hath been guilty, and the complicated odiousness of his conduct. As every sin partakes of the same nature, and implies the same disregard to God, he mourns for all, and every one; whether man were injured by it or not; whether it were secret or open; a sin of omission, or of commission; and whether it were or were not contrary to the notions, maxims, customs, and allowance of the world. Yea, every sinful temper, imagination, and inclination; every idle unprofitable word; every evil action of his whole life, as upon examination it recurs to his remembrance, excites afresh his godly sorrow. In proportion as he recollects the numberless instances of God's unwearied patience and kindness to him in former years, he becomes more sensible of his own ingratitude, forgetfulness, and disobedience: and the further he is enlightened to see the glory of God, the more hateful

‡ Psalm li. 4. § 2 Cor. vii. 9, 10.

all sin appears, and the more he mourns over his own offences.

As, therefore, the glory of the divine character shines forth more illustriously from the person and sufferings of Jesus, than from all the other works of God; the true penitent's sorrow will be more or less intense, in proportion to the degree of his spiritual apprehension and realizing views of that great event. When with fixed attention he can meditate on the divine Surety for sinners, agonizing in the garden and expiring on the cross; when he can realize to his mind, in the exercise of faith, who He was that suffered; and what he endured from the cruelty and insult of men, the power and malice of Satan, and the avenging justice of the Father; and wherefore he suffered, that he might bear our sins, and expiate our guilt: then in an especial manner his mind is deeply impressed with admiring views of the awful holiness and justice, and the unfathomable love and compassion of God; then sin appears to his mind peculiarly odious, as committed against a God of such a lovely and loving character; then he becomes abominable in his own eyes, and mourns for his sins with peculiar humiliation. They now become a sore burden, too heavy for him to bear; he goes mourning for them all the day long, yet mourns that he can mourn no more, is ashamed that he is no more affected, and abhors himself for the remaining hardness of his heart.

He now no longer vindicates his conduct, or extenuates his crimes: his mouth is stopped, his guilt is manifest, and he condemns himself. His judgment of his own character is now totally changed:

he used to admire and approve, now he abhors and loathes himself; he was disposed to exalt himself, now he becomes more and more disposed to self-abasement. Then turning his thoughts inward, he traces back the streams of sin, which have polluted his life, to that fountain of iniquity in his heart from whence they sprang. "Behold," says he, "I was "shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother con-"ceive me†."—Abased in himself, and impressed with an awful sense of the holy majesty of God, he would despond, yea, at length absolutely despair, were he not supported by discoveries of the rich mercy of God, and the precious salvation of the Gospel. Yet thus encouraged, he indeed ventures to speak unto the Lord, but it is in the publican's self-abased frame of spirit, and humble words, "God "be merciful to me a sinner."

This deep humiliation of soul renders a man backward to conclude his repentance genuine, his faith sincere, and his sins forgiven. These blessings appear in his eyes so large, his own character so vile, and his humiliation so small, in comparison with what he is conscious it ought to be, that he can hardly raise his hopes so high: and he is so aware of the wickedness of his heart, and discovers so much of Satan's artifice, that he fears being imposed on by a false peace, where eternity is at stake. But when this hope springs up in his heart, and he discovers, by comparing it with the Scripture, with fervent prayer, that "it is the hope that maketh not "ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad "in his heart by the holy Ghost given unto him;"

† Psalm, li. 5.

this is so far from drying up his tears, and terminating his repentance, that it vastly enlarges and purifies his godly sorrow; which is now attended with a sweetness far exceeding all earthly joy. The fuller assurance he possesses that Jesus "was wounded for "*his* transgressions, and was bruised for *his* iniqui-"ties," the more he abhors his sins and loathes himself. Here he sees with personal application, what wrath sin merited! What punishment he was worthy of! When a God of such immense compassion would not pardon one sin, without such a satisfaction; yea, would rather not spare his own Son, but be pleased to bruise him in whom his soul delighted, than either leave sin unpunished, or sinful men to perish!

His own concern in this transaction, directs his attention peculiarly to it. "The Father loved *him*, "and gave his beloved Son to die for *him:* Christ "loved *him*, and gave himself for him, and interce-"ded for him:" and thus *he* was spared and borne with, all the years of his rebellion, whilst many others were cut off in their sins. At length "God "who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith "he loved him, even when dead in sins, quickened "him" by his Spirit: thus born of God, he was pardoned, justified, and adopted into God's family, and numbered amongst the heirs of eternal glory; to which he is sealed by the graces and consolations of the Holy Spirit: as these are the earnest of the promised inheritance. Such discoveries and prospects elevate the soul to a degree of adoring love and gratitude, before unknown; and this increases the penitent's self-abasement and godly sorrow.

His heart is even broken, and as it were melted, when he considers the number and odiousness of the crimes committed against the glorious and gracious God, who was all the while full of love to him. His character is stamped, "a mourner that shall be "comforted:" yet is his a sweet sorrow: whilst with tears of contrition and gratitude, he praises a pardoning God and a bleeding Saviour, he realizes the paradox, "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing:" except that in some dark seasons his heart is insensible, both to the motions of godly sorrow, and of holy joy. These alternate variations in the frame of his spirit, the true Christian experiences through the remainder of his life. His more melting seasons of godly sorrow are blended with, and prepare the way for his sweetest consolations; which again increase and purify his mourning for sin; as he then most clearly perceives what a gracious and glorious God he hath offended, and how vile he hath been. Thus ingenuous sorrow and holy joy reciprocally assist one another; they intermingle with, and are proportioned to each other, in his daily experience; till at length death closes the varied scene. Then God wipes away all tears from his eyes; the days of his mourning are ended, he shall eternally be comforted, and plenteously reap that harvest which here he sowed in tears.—I do not mean to determine any thing concerning the degree in which true penitents obtain these spiritual discoveries, or experience these flowing affections and melting frames. 'Tis enough if we can describe the distinguishing nature of true repentance. True grace is of the same

nature and tendency, whether we have much or little of it.

If then the genuine sorrow for sin, required in Scripture has been described, it is no objection to say, that many true Christians have very little of these views and affections; because that is only to say, in other words, that they have but little true repentance; or, (which amounts to the same thing,) have but little true grace. And the less they have of these things, the less evident is their conversion; the more need have "they to examine themselves, "whether they be in the faith;" and to "give dili- "gence to make their calling and election sure." Certainly we must not adulterate the word of God, that we may accommodate it to the experience of lukewarm professors in a day when "iniquity "abounds, and the love of many waxes cold." This would be the way to reduce things from bad to worse, till true religion vanish from among us. We must still keep to the standard of God's word, the experience of scriptural saints, and the specimen of primitive Christians, endeavouring to stir up men's minds to imitate these illustrious examples. And on careful examination, I trust, the above description of godly sorrow will be found scriptural: all real Christians have experienced something of it, and habitually do experience it: and the more distinct their views, the more enlarged their affections, and the deeper their contrition; the more evidently they are true penitents, and entitled to all the consolations belonging to that character.

Nor is the order, in which these things are experienced, at all material, provided the godly sorrow be

of the proper nature and tendency: yet I would just observe, that at all times it is begun before *assured* hope of salvation; otherwise pardon and the *assurance of it* would be vouchsafed to impenitent sinners; but it is much enlarged by this assurance, wherever it is scripturally possessed; as the believer now "looks upon him whom he hath pierced, and "mourns." It begins previously to the sense of pardoning love, and is perfected by it; because the believer's love to the Lord is thus increased, and this increases sorrow for having offended him. Let this be well digested, and then let us proceed to observe that,

II. Repentance is 'attended with a real inclination to undo, if it were possible, all that we have 'sinfully done; and consequently with an endeavour 'as far as we have it in our power, to counteract the 'consequences of our former evil conduct.'—This frame of spirit will manifest itself,

1. By ingenuous confession of our sins to the glory of that God, whom by sin we have dishonoured. Thus Joshua exhorts Achan; "My son, give "glory to the Lord, and make confession unto him." The commission of sin impeaches the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God; and seems to say, that he hath forbidden us something conducive to our real happiness. Obstinacy in sin defies his power, dares his vengeance, and despises his truth and holiness: to vindicate ourselves, and cover our sins, arraigns the righteousness of his threatenings and judgments, or affronts his omniscience: thus the sinner robs God of his glory. What he hath done cannot be undone; nor is it in his power to make satisfaction

for the injustice of which he hath been guilty, except he bear the eternal punishment. Convinced of this, the true penitent flees for refuge to the atoning blood of Jesus. But though he cannot make satisfaction for his sins, or do any thing towards meriting pardon, or reward, (for this he knows must be wholly of free mercy:) yet what he can do, he will. He will both in secret, and openly, on all proper occasions, make full and unreserved confession of his crimes and condemn himself; and thus glorify God's justice and mercy, glorify his law as the ministration of condemnation, and his Gospel as the ministration of righteousness: for "both are glorious, "though the latter exceed in glory§." All who have even a superficial acquaintance with the Bible, know that this is every where spoken of as an essential part of true repentance, and often put for the whole of it; I shall not, therefore, further dwell upon it, but shall confine myself to two observations. First, that secret sins require only secret confession unto that God, who knoweth and seeth in secret: but public scandals require public acknowledgements; that we may openly honour God by our confession, as we have dishonoured him openly by our conduct. Thus when David had by adultery and murder given cause to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; by writing and publishing the fifty-first Psalm, he publicly took shame to himself even before his own servants, subjects, and children; and thus gave glory unto God, and stopped the blasphemy of the ungodly. Secondly, that the true penitent, though general in his public confessions, should

§ 2 Cor. iii. 7—11.

be, and will be, very particular in his secret confessions; reviewing, enumerating, and bemoaning all his sins, of every sort, with all their various aggravations.

2. This disposition of mind will influence the penitent to make ample restitution to those whom he hath defrauded or injured. Under the ceremonial law, the trespass-offering was to be accompanied by restitution to the injured party†. The plain meaning of which institution Christ hath given us in his sermon on the Mount. "If thou bring thy gift unto "the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother "hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift be- "fore the altar, and go thy way; *first* be reconciled "to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Thus it was that Zaccheus evidenced the sincerity of his repentance: and thus every sincere convert, with self-indignation, will haste to be rid of that accursed thing, dishonest gain‡: with scrupulousness and diligence he will search for every remainder of it: he will restore it with interest to the injured, if he can; if not he will give it to their relatives, and to the poor: and should he be unable to do this, (which he will put himself to much inconvenience and self-denial, rather than not effect;) it will be long the occasion of additional trouble of mind to him. Let me ask thee, beloved reader, if thou thinkest thyself a penitent, whether thou hast well considered this part of repentance? whether thou hast impartially examined thyself on this score? whether thou hast imitated Zaccheus in this matter? Or art thou sure thou

† Lev. vi. 1—7.

‡ Who shaketh his hands from holding of bribes. Is. xxxiii. 15.

hast no cause, having never injured any man by fraud, violence, or extortion? I warn thee beforehand, that God will bring to light these hidden things of darkness, and fully investigate this matter at the day of judgment. And no § *unrighteous* persons, who, having injured their neighbours, love the gains of iniquity so well as to refuse restitution, shall inherit the kingdom of God. This evidence of sincerity is so distinguishing, that I cannot but conclude, judging by the Bible, that all appearances of repentance, all pretences to experience, without this, are hypocritical and delusory. What shall we say then to many persons, who having formerly, under colour of law, been, *perhaps* unwillingly, injurious to their creditors, still keep them out of their just rights; nay, see them struggling with those difficulties into which their extravagance hath plunged them; whilst they themselves now live at ease, or in affluence: and are well able, (if they could prevail with themselves to retrench superfluous expenses,) to make restitution in whole, or in part; but will not, because not compelled by the law of the land? These persons evidently confound human laws with doing the will of God; and prefer wealth, indulgence, and the pride of life, to the golden rule, of "doing unto "others, as they would they should do unto them." Whatever profession of religion any one may make, his religion is vain, and a discourse upon repentance would be exceedingly defective, which did not bear testimony against this common and flagrant conduct.

Another evil, I am told, very common among persons professing evangelical religion, as well as

§ 1 Cor. vi. 9.

others, is dealing in smuggled or contraband goods. This trade is in itself,—an evident violation of God's express command† ;—a robbery upon the community, which must be taxed to make up the deficiency; —and aiding and abetting all the enormities that smugglers commit.—But necessity is pretended. I suppose it is necessary in order to be rich. "But "they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a "snare, and into divers foolish and hurtful lusts, "which drown men in destruction and perdition: "For the love of money is the root of all evil§."

But our evil conduct may injure others, not only in their property, but in their reputation, in their connexions, in their peace of mind, and in many other ways: and the true penitent, though he cannot undo what is past; yet will endeavour to counteract the mischief, at the expense of stooping to the most humiliating submissions, of making the frankest acknowledgements, or by any method in his power, however contrary to the pride and self-love of the human heart.

3. This disposition of mind will induce a man to retract those false principles, which he has advanced, that may have a tendency to propagate or countenance infidelity or profaneness: and to counteract the consequence of his evil conduct, where it hath prejudiced men's minds against religion, or induced and emboldened them in sin; or any ways tended to the dishonour of God, and the ruin of souls. Gladly would he undo this part of his conduct: it ever grieves him upon reflection: he is pained that the seed is sown, and springs up and grows, notwith-

† Rom. xiii. 6, 7. § 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

standing all his endeavours to the contrary. But as far as his retraction, his arguments, his persuasions, his example, and influence can reach, he will endeavour to prevent the further progress of the mischief.—In these and various other particulars, true repentance influences a man sincerely to desire and endeavour to counteract the tendency of his former evil conduct: but appearances of humiliation for sin may be, and often are, without this distinguishing effect. Thus Ahab humbled himself and was clothed in sackcloth, but neither restored Naboth's vineyard, nor ceased to commit iniquity.

III. True repentance is attended with a determination of mind, through divine grace, to walk for the future in newness of life, evidenced to be sincere, by fruits meet for repentance, that is, by all holy dispositions, words, and actions.

This is at last the grand distinction betwixt true repentance, and all false appearances. Though men be abundant in shedding tears, and make the most humiliating confessions, or most ample restitution; though they openly retract their false principles, and are zealous in promoting true religion; though they relate the most plausible story of experiences, and profess to be favoured with the most glorious manifestations; though they have strong confidence, high affections, orthodox sentiments, exact judgment, and extensive knowledge: yet, except they do works meet for repentance, all the rest is nothing, they are still in their sins. For the tree is known by the fruit; and "every tree that bringeth "not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into "the fire." Yea, though Cain's terror, Judas' con-

fession and restitution, Pharaoh's fair promises, Ahab's humiliation, Herod's reverencing the prophet, hearing him gladly, and doing many things; the stony ground hearer's joy; together with the tongue of men and angels, the gifts of miracles and prophecies, and the knowledge of all mysteries, were combined in one man; they would not prove him a true penitent, so long as the love of one lust remained unmortified in his heart, or the practice of it is *allowed* in his life.

Unless the drunkard become habitually sober, and the churl learn to be liberal; unless the contentious man learn meekness, and the proud humility; unless every man break off, and set himself to oppose and mortify his constitutional and customary iniquity; there is no real repentance. The man's mind is not changed respecting sin: he does not sincerely grieve that ever he committed it, nor really desire it undone, nor heartily abhor it, nor is willing to be finally divorced from it; not from his darling indulgence, his Delilah, his Herodias; however he be affected, alarmed, and restrained.

I allow, that the true penitent will find work enough all his life with his own peculiar evil propensities; and after all his watchfulness, prayer, and determination of mind against every sin, will too often manifest, to his great sorrow, that his evil nature is not destroyed, and that sin yet dwells within him: but he will also give abundant evidence that no sin hath dominion over him; that his own iniquity is peculiarly abhorred, dreaded, and opposed; and that, in short, "he is a new creature, old things are past "away, behold, all things are become new." This

will not be so evident to others, in the case of a man, who was before moral and decent in his character: but it will be equally manifest to his own conscience; whilst he observes that he now acts from other principles, to other ends, and by another rule than heretofore; and now has not only regard to those things with which men are acquainted, but with equal care and attention abstains from secret sins, from evil tempers, intentions, and imaginations which are manifest only unto God.

It appears then, beloved, that this necessary repentance is a very arduous business. Thus our Lord represents it: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; "for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be "able." Do you object the profit and pleasantness of your sins, and the pain of renouncing them? He answers, "If thy right eye offend thee pluck it out; "if thy right hand or foot offend thee, cut it off, for "it is profitable for thee," thus maimed and mutilated, "to enter into life, rather than having two eyes, "two hands, two feet, to be cast into hell, where "*their* worm never dieth, and the fire is not quenched." When the difficulty is objected, the necessity is urged, the awful alternative, repentance, or eternal damnation. But should any urge the impossibility; he proposes the effectual assistance of Him to whom all things are possible. An easy, slothful religion may serve a man to live with: but a diligent, self-denying religion alone will comfortably prepare a man to meet death. "Except a man deny him-"self, take up his cross daily, and forsake all that "he hath, he cannot be my disciple," saith the loving Saviour of the world, the Judge of the living and

the dead: and because we are so backward to believe it, and so much depends upon believing it, he confirms it with a double asseveration—" Verily, " verily, I say unto you."

But though the work be great, and require labour and self-denial, there is no cause for despondency; the encouragements are proportionable: the success certain to every one who is in good earnest about it; and the work itself unspeakably more pleasant than all the forbidden delights of sin.

PART III.

ENCOURAGEMENTS TO REPENTANCE.

I HAVE already intimated, that he who, convinced of the necessity of repentance, in good earnest uses those means which God hath appointed in order to it, may depend upon the effectual assistance of the holy Spirit in this important undertaking, which will render it both practicable and pleasant: and the same topic will afterwards be resumed, when those means are treated of. I shall not, therefore, further speak upon that subject in this place, but lead your attention to those encouragements, which arise from the assurance that repentance is inseparably connected with salvation.

I. In the first place, "God commandeth all men "every where to repent." Were there any of the human race who did not need repentance; or any to whom repentance would be unavailing, we may be sure God would not have given such a commandment. He sends no message of this kind to fallen angels, or the souls of wicked men who have died in their sins; because he hath determined to show

them no mercy. Having done wrong in sinning, doubtless they continue to do wrong in not repenting: and their impenitent rebellion and enmity to God, will eternally illustrate his justice in their condemnation; as all will see, that he doth not without cause treat them as enemies. A man who hath murdered his lawful prince, though the law must have its course, ought to repent, and shows a still more desperate spirit of rebellion if he die vindicating his conduct. Yet the avenger of blood, designing no mercy, requires no submission. A command to submit and repent, if sent to a company of condemned criminals, would directly excite a beam of hope in every relenting breast.—God sends his ministers and word, commanding thee, O sinner, to repent: were no more said, thou mightest safely draw this conclusion:—'Certainly he hath thoughts of peace, 'and intends to show mercy to all who obey the 'summons.'

II. God is always in Scripture represented as peculiarly ready to receive and entertain repenting sinners. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning "himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was "chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: "turn me and I shall be turned; for thou art the "LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I "repented: and after that I was instructed, I smote "upon my thigh. I was ashamed, yea, even con-"founded, because I did bear the reproach of my "youth.—Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a plea-"sant child? for since I spake against him, I do "earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels "are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy

" upon him saith the LORD§." Here is the true penitent, mourning for sin, covered with shame, and crying for mercy; and the encouraging answer of that God, " who waited to be gracious." The same is most emphatically inculcated by the experience of David in the thirty-second Psalm. There mark carefully, how soon the sweet sense of forgiving love followed his ingenuous confession of guilt.

But omitting many other Scriptures for the sake of brevity, let me detain you a little in meditating on the prodigal son; a parable spoken on purpose to encourage the publicans and sinners, who listened to the words of Jesus. Let us attentively consider the character of the prodigal, his disdainful and ungrateful behaviour to a wise and indulgent father, his debauched and dissolute life, and the misery to which he was reduced. Here, as in a glass, we may see ourselves; our pride and ingratitude, our contempt of God and wilful departure from him, our folly, and our misery whilst we live in sin. Then let us view him at length *come to himself*, conscious of his guilt, sinking under his misery, covered with shame, adopting the resolution of returning to his offended father, with penitent confessions and humble supplications. Discouraged as well as humbled, by the recollection of his own vileness, his only hope arises from meditating on the kindness of him whom he had so basely offended; and he can just enough raise his mind above despondency to expect, that, perhaps, after many repulses, and reiterated submissions and intreaties, answered by deserved upbraidings, his father might be at length prevailed on

§ Jer. xxxi. 18—20.

to admit him, in some mean capacity, to share that plenty which his servants enjoyed. Here we have the frame of spirit, the hopes, and the fears, of the true penitent, most affectingly delineated.—But behold the tender father is looking out with eager expectation for the return of his lost prodigal: he sees him afar off, and, through paternal tenderness and compassion, is regardless of his age and gravity, and runs to meet him. Finding that he abhorred and condemned himself, without one reproach or the least delay, he welcomes him as a son; clothes, feasts, and rejoices over him, and commands all his servants to rejoice with him: "Because," says he, "this my son was dead and is alive! was lost, and "is found!"

Thus shall every true penitent be welcomed by a gracious God. Not only shall he meet with a kinder reception than his fears foreboded; but his most sanguine expectations shall be far exceeded; his sins, however numerous, shall not be mentioned against him; his wants shall be all supplied; pardon and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, shall be conferred on him; the robe of righteousness and salvation shall clothe him; angels in heaven shall rejoice more over him, than over ninety and nine Pharisees, who in their own judgment need no repentance; yea, God himself shall acknowledge him as his own child, and rejoice over him to do him good. Arise then, poor dejected sinner, and imitate this prodigal.

III. We have seen that repentance and forgiveness are connected, in a great many texts of Scripture, which have been cited, and many others might be produced. But I would more especially call your

attention to those encouraging promises, which are expressly confined to such as are exercising repentance. It would be a needless prolixity to enumerate the whole, or the most, of these promises: a few examples may suffice.—"Thus saith the high "and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose "name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, "with him also that is of a contrite and humble "spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to "revive the heart of the contrite ones."—"To this "man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a "contrite heart, and that trembleth at my word†." —"He looketh upon men, and if any say I have sinned, I have perverted that which is *right*, and it "profiteth me not: he shall deliver his soul from "going down into the pit, and his life shall see the "light‡."—"He that covereth his sins shall not "prosper; but he that confesseth, and forsaketh his "sins, shall find mercy§."—"If we say that we "have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth "is not in us; but if we confess our sins, God is "faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to "cleanse us from all unrighteousness¶." Let but the broken-hearted sinner well consider these few citations, and plead them in prayer, through the intercession of Jesus, and he will find them full of consolation. Then let him search the Scriptures, and he will observe that no one character is so particularly encouraged as that of the penitent; under the titles of mourners, poor in spirit, contrite, humble, and such others, as are included in the explana-

† Is. lvii. 15. lxvi. 2.
‡ Job. xxxiii. 27, 28.
§ Prov. xxviii. 13.
¶ 1 John i. 9.

tion that has been given of true repentance. These things abundantly prove, that none but true penitents share the blessings, or are entitled to the consolations, which flow from the salvation of the Gospel: and that no degree of aggravated guilt can exclude any such repenting sinner from the participation of the one, and the enjoyment of the other.

But let not any from hence conclude, that these privileges are properly the rewards of repentance, or that it atones for our crimes. This would supersede the necessity of the expiatory sufferings of Jesus, and militate with St. Paul's express declaration, "that we are justified by *faith*, through the "righteousness of Christ," and consequently would infer, "that Christ died in vain." Did we repent of ourselves, without the preventing and assisting grace of God; and were our repentance perfect in its nature and fruits, it could not avail for our justification in any degree. It is indeed, observable, that even they, who speak of atoning for our transgressions of the divine law by repentance, change their language when they have occasion to treat of the laws of human governments: you seldom hear them speak of a traitor or murderer making atonement for his crimes by *repentance*, but by *his death*. This sacrifice to justice, the law demands: this alone expiates the offence: and if a criminal, however penitent or disposed to future obedience, escape punishment; the law is dispensed with, justice is relaxed, and no atonement made. But God's justice is perfect, and can admit of no relaxation: his law must be magnified and made honourable, and cannot be dispensed with. Not the repentance, but the eternal punish-

ment of the offender, is the atonement indispensably insisted upon, or one equally honourable to the precept and sanction of the divine law. This the true penitent perceives or allows; he subscribes the sentence of his own condemnation, and humbly trusts in that vicarious atonement which the Son of God once made, and which is of infinite value and efficacy; and through which "God is JUST, and the "Justifier of the believer." That repentance, which is depended on for justification, is a proud unbelieving repentance, and not the humble repentance here treated of.

But in fact, repentance, where it is genuine, is the gift of God. Thus St. Paul speaks on this subject to his beloved Timothy: "In meekness instructing "those that oppose themselves, if God, peradventure "will give them repentance, to the acknowledging "of the truth, and that they may recover themselves "out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive "by him at his will*." In like manner the apostle Peter, before the Jewish rulers, declared concerning Jesus whom they had crucified: "Him hath "God exalted to be a Prince and Saviour, for to "give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of "sins." And when the same apostle gave his brethren and the church at Jerusalem an account of the conversion of Cornelius and his household; they "glorified God, saying, Then hath God to the "Gentiles granted repentance unto life†."

This accords to the prediction, or promise, which JEHOVAH gave by the prophet Zechariah, "I will "pour out upon the house of David, and upon the

* 2 Tim. ii. 25. 26. † Acts v. 31. xi. 28.

" inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and " supplication; and they shall look upon me whom " they have pierced, and mourn for him, as one " mourneth for his only son*." This was fulfilled in part, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the crucifiers of Christ, on the day of Pentecost; and when, being pricked to the heart, and inquiring of the apostles, " what they must do?" three thousand obeyed the call to " Repent and be baptized in the " name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." In entire harmony with these decisive testimonies of holy writ, are those petitions in our excellent liturgy, which, alas! are often so familiar to the ear, as scarcely to excite the attention of the understanding, and not at all to affect the heart of many professed worshippers in the established church: ' Let us ' beseech him to grant us true repentance and his ' holy Spirit.' ' That it may please thee to give us ' true repentance.'—' Create and make in us new ' and contrite hearts;' with expressions implying the same important truth, which continually occur in many parts of our most scriptural liturgy.

In fact, though we have so much cause for repentance, and *are in duty* bound to repent: yet our proud carnal hearts are naturally destitute of the least disposition or inclination to this duty. The shame, therefore, of our obstinate impenitency belongs to us: but the whole glory of our repentance, when the grace of God disposes and enables us to repent, is due to him, " who worketh in us to will " and to do of his good pleasure." So far then are

* Zech. xii. 10.

we from meriting any thing by repenting, that we are laid under fresh obligations to him, "who hath "granted us repentance unto life." "Do not err, "my beloved brethren, every good gift, and every "perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from "the Father of lights." Yet, on the other hand, let us not regard those, who represent our natural want of inclination, as an excuse for impenitency; not considering that the dominion of pride and the love of sin which renders us incapable of our duty, forms itself the very essence of that impenitent heart, which God abhors and will condemn, and which cannot be its own excuse.—Nor is the most penitent person in the world perfect in his repentance. No man hates sin in a degree equal to its hatefulness: no man condemns, abases, and abhors himself, as much as he ought to do, or as much as he would, did he more perfectly behold the glory of God, the excellency of the law, the evil of sin, and the multitude of his own transgressions; or had he more fixed views of the nature and glory of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. He that is habitually most penitent, finds his repentance capable of increase, when his views are enlarged, and his heart is peculiarly affected with these discoveries: but even in these seasons, his enlarged godly sorrow is little in comparison to what it ought to be, and would be, did he, instead of "seeing through a glass darkly, "see face to face." How far then doth the general frame of his spirit, when his mind is comparatively dark and unaffected, come short of the perfection of repentance! Over this every sincere Christian mourns, and for this seeks forgiveness.

For similar reasons, the *fruits* of repentance do nothing towards atoning for our sins, meriting a reward, or justifying us before God. Take a familiar illustration. You owe your tradesman a sum of money; and you now continue to deal with him for ready money only: yet the old debt is not by this diminished. But should you daily purchase to the value of a crown; and only pay daily one shilling, your debt would rapidly increase. Perfect obedience is no more than what is due to our Creator: so that after we have by sin for years run in arrear with him, did we obey during all the remainder of a long life as perfectly as an arch-angel, our love and obedience would be no more than is due for the present, and could do nothing towards discharging the old account: even with the apostle Paul's obedience, the debt would rapidly increase. Sure I am, whilst I now write, that I this moment am more deeply deserving of condemnation than ever; because, though I hope sincerely penitent, I daily add recent transgressions to my former sins, and I shall certainly perish if Jesus do not plead for me, "Deliver him from "going down into the pit—behold the ransom."

This salvation, through the ransom and intercession of the Son of God, every true penitent cordially approves and thankfully embraces, and shall certainly participate. My brethren, an impenitent believer, and a penitent unbeliever, are ideal characters, which have no existence unless in some men's imagination; except where the repentance is counterfeit, and the faith dead. Genuine repentance and faith, are twin graces produced together, thriving together, and forwarding each other's growth.

It is true some exercises of faith precede, and produce repentance in the regenerate soul: but repentance precedes, and makes way for that exercise of faith, which interests the soul in the merits of Christ for salvation. The belief of the existence and perfections of God, his law and government; of our relations, obligations, and accountableness to him; of the future state, the day of judgment, heaven, and hell, always precedes repentance, and is influential in leading men to it: a belief of several truths respecting Jesus Christ and his salvation, generally, though perhaps not always, precedes. But he must be already in some degree penitent, who can cordially approve and embrace that salvation: for whilst a man remains impenitent, his proud heart will have insuperable objections to it; insuperable I say, in any other way, than by that change of judgment and disposition, which is denominated repentance.

The salvation revealed in the Gospel, exalts God upon the throne, and requires the sinner to submit to his authority and righteousness, and give him the whole glory of his salvation. This appears most equitable to the true penitent, and to him alone. 'Let God be glorified,' says he, 'by all in heaven 'and earth, whatever becomes of me: but should he 'mercifully save so vile and worthless a rebel, I shall 'be an eternal monument of the riches of his mercy, 'and the power of his grace.'—The Gospel is intended to put honour upon the law: "it is holy, just, "and good," says the penitent soul: "I consent "unto it that it is good," 'and I have deserved its 'awful curse for my vile transgressions: I rejoice to 'see this holy law magnified in the obedience unto

'death of God incarnate: I long to have it written 'in my heart by the finger of the Spirit: and my 'prayer is, "Oh that my ways were directed to keep "thy righteous precepts." The Gospel shows sin to be exceedingly sinful, and discovers its infinite odiousness and just demerit; the true penitent, and he alone, irreconcileably hates all sin, even that which was his most darling indulgence. The Gospel abases the sinner, silences his excuses, rejects his pleas, strips him of his distinctions, and without regard to his learning, wisdom, wealth, honour, morality, or amiable character among men, treats him as a sinner condemned to die, deserving and fitted for destruction. To this the true penitent, and he alone, cordially submits. "I loathe and abhor myself." "To me belongs shame, and confusion of face," is the genuine expression of his humble heart.

The Gospel honours Christ, as the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, the all in all. Thus he appears to the true penitent, and to none else. In his person, undertaking, righteousness, atonement, resurrection, mediatorial exaltation, offices, (as King, Priest, and Prophet,) intercession, instructions, example, and Spirit of grace, he appears to the humbled sinner altogether suitable, sufficient, and precious. On every other side despair lowers; the glory of God, and the honour of the law, demand his destruction: but here hope brightens; here he sees God glorious and sinners saved: here he sees every thing exactly suited to his wants, and his desires: here he may have his sins pardoned, his corruptions subdued, his ignorance removed, grace communicated, strength renewed, and every thing bestowed free-

ly, without money and without price, which can raise him from the brink of hell, and the borders of despair, to the "lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading." Christ appears to him "the Pearl of great price," "the chief among "ten thousand, and altogether lovely." "He counts "all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of "him." To him he flees, though with trembling heart, lest he should meet with a repulse; with trembling hand he lays hold on this only hope; to him he cleaves in the midst of discouragements and delays, and answers every rising despondency with, "Lord, "to whom shall I go, thou hast the words of eternal "life." Nothing but impenitent pride and love of sin render men blind to the glory, deaf to the voice, or negligent to the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ: nor can any thing but a penitent sense of the evil of sin, and the misery of a sinner, reconcile the proud heart of man to this salvation.

Though repentance, therefore, do not in any degree merit pardon; yet it is that disposition of mind, which both prepares the soul to receive it, and renders the possessor a meet object on whom a holy God may honourably bestow it: and no further obstacle remaining, divine justice being satisfied in the sufferings of the Redeemer: the point yielded by the sinner's repentance that he did deserve to perish, and is saved by free grace; and his heart being now rendered willing to be saved in the appointed way; he shall, without all doubt or delay, have salvation, and the consolation which springs from it.

Were more encouragement needful, I might lead your attention to the many examples, with which

the word of God furnishes us, of sinners, who had committed the most atrocious crimes, and borne the most infamous characters, for complicated long continued guilt, who on repentance were pardoned and saved. It will be enough to recite a few of their names: such were Manasseh; the woman who was a sinner, a scandalous and notorious sinner; the thief on the cross; Saul the persecutor; and the very men who crucified the Prince of Life! These instances are doubtless recorded purposely for the encouragement of those who are ready to conclude, that their sins are too many and too great to be forgiven; and they form a very important proof and exemplification of our doctrine; that no degree of guilt can exclude the true penitent from forgiveness; through the blood of Christ. For although our Lord speaks of some, who sin against the Holy Ghost, and shall never be forgiven; and the apostle John mentions a sin unto death, which they who have committed should not be prayed for; yet St. Paul extricates us out of this difficulty, by informing us, "that it is impossible to renew them to repent-" ance;" which forms indeed an awful warning to those who harden their hearts against conviction and in impenitency, but affords no exception to our doctrine, and need give no discouragement to the penitent soul.

And now, sinners, you see the necessity of repentance, the real nature of it, and the abundant encouragement you have to repent. I would hope, that from regard to your eternal welfare, you will set about it in good earnest; not only in preference to your vain amusements and dissipations, but even

to your most important business and interests, which are of no consequence in comparison with this "one thing needful." Arise then, and be doing, and the Lord will both assist and prosper your endeavours.

PART IV.

THE PROPER SEASONS FOR REPENTANCE.

Such persons as are but superficially acquainted with the credulity of man, and the artifice of Satan; as have taken but little notice of the workings of their own hearts, and made but little observation of what passes around them, may be apt to conclude this part of our subject needless: yet, I trust, it will be found to be of great importance, and essentially necessary, to a discourse concerning the proper seasons for repentance.

The words of the Psalmist, quoted by the Apostle, comprise what I shall urge on this head; "To-day, "if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." The present time alone is our's: yesterday is irrecoverably gone; to-morrow we may be in eternity! Were then all of you in the prime of youth, I would endeavour to enforce on all, the necessity of *early* repentance.

To such then I first address myself. Consider, *young sinner*, that custom is a second nature: thy innate depravity forges the chains which hold thee

in bondage, but custom rivets them upon thee. This is not mere speculation,—it is the language of inspiration. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or "the leopard his spots? then may he, who is ACCUSTOMED to do evil, learn to do well."

Repentance may be considered, either as the work of divine grace in us, or as our own work by the assistance of divine grace. "Work out your "own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is "God, that worketh in you to will and to do, of his "good pleasure." Doubtless it is always alike easy to Almighty God, to change the heart and renew the sinner: yet the sinner, when thus influenced to will, and to do, may find vastly more difficulty in some cases and circumstances, than he would in others. When worldly interests, cares, and projects, together with customary indulgences, have added strength to your lusts, you will find repentance vastly more arduous than at present. You will then find it vastly more difficult to cease to do evil, and to learn to do well, to separate from the ungodly, and to habituate your appetites and passions to controul. If you now delay, and *should* hereafter repent, you will bitterly know what it is to "pluck out a right eye, "and to cut off a right hand." When to the opposition of lusts grown ungovernable by gratification, and remorse for sins which exceed calculation, bitter reflection* on the irreparable mischief you have been doing all your life; you add what it will cost you to renounce the friendship, to withstand the persuasions and enticements, to resist the arguments,

* Consider in this place, what hath been urged of the necessity of restitution, Part II. He who repents early escapes that difficulty.

to face the scorn and bear the reproach, of those comrades in iniquity, with whom you are hitherto happily unconnected: whilst perhaps your own children trained up in wickedness, or the wife or husband of your bosom, whom you have ignorantly espoused, may be among the number of those, who are an offence unto you. Are you, therefore, in youth, in early youth, yea, in childhood? you are not too young to be sinners, both by nature and practice: evil dispositions and evil actions, render repentance both needful and reasonable; and without it you must perish in your sins. Even now, therefore, I call upon you in the name of God, to "repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for "repentance." Listen not to your corruptions, to your companions, to the cruel murderer of souls, who would persuade you that it is soon enough yet. —Millions are now in outer darkness, who on earth, intended sometime to repent, but imagined they had time enough before them. Perhaps there are scarcely any, who did not once think as you are now thinking, and flatter themselves as you do. Will you also trifle with the Almighty, till his patience be wearied out, and he cut you off, as he hath those who thus provoked him before you; and send you to be their companions whose example you would imitate*?

Do you imagine you shall find less difficulty, or have more resolution to break through difficulties, hereafter? Alas! your difficulties will daily both be multiplied and gather force; and you will find less

* Jer. xiii. 27.—Wo unto thee, O Jerusalem, WILT thou not be made clean?—When shall it once be?

and less inclination or resolution to encounter them. Fear, shame, and conscience will make gradually more feeble resistance; restraints of education will wear off, and you will grow bolder in iniquity. Finding respite from punishment, you will grow more secure and hardened in sin, till perhaps God will give you over to incurable obstinacy.

Do you imagine that sinful pleasures can afford you more satisfaction, than is to be found in serious godliness? Poor deluded souls, I compassionate your case, whilst I abhor the blasphemous supposition. Once I thought the same; I bless God for undeceiving me, and beg of him to grant you the same mercy. "There is no peace, saith my God, for the wicked." "Vanity and vexation," are stamped upon all created enjoyments. They consist of eager expectations; continual anxiety, disappointments, and mortifications; a few turbulent short-lived gratifications, insipid amusements, and fatiguing pursuits of pleasure. The mind of the poor deluded man, who thus seeks happiness where it is not, is uneasy in waiting for the season of enjoyment; surfeited and dissatisfied even at the moment he longed for; pained at the retrospect; alarmed when he looks forward to death and judgment; and he can find no respite from anxiety, but by banishing reflection, and foregoing the noblest privilege of the rational nature.—Your smiles, ye votaries of pleasure, are hypocritical; your mirth affectation; your heart is heaviness in the midst of your loudest peals of laughter: remorse of conscience and foreboding fears often disturb even your most jovial hours, and extort the unwilling sigh; but they render solitude and reflec-

tion bitterness; whilst the least remembrance of death, or symptom of its approach, excites a horror I have felt, but cannot describe.

This is earthly, ungodly pleasure, even when health, affluence, and all conceivable advantages concur to add relish to it: but when sickness seizes the poor wretch, who knows no other joy; when poverty and adversity depress, and death approaches, his case is so miserable, and his anguish so intolerable, that no words can sufficiently express it.

But true religion is the source of the sweetest serenity, the most refined delight, the most exquisite enjoyment. From conscious integrity, peace with God, submission to his will, and reliance on his providential and gracious care, spring calm content with the present, and serene expectations of the future: and these form a "peace of God, which "passeth all understanding." Victory over the fear of death, and a well-grounded and lively hope of eternal happiness, support the soul in adversity, and increase the enjoyment of prosperity. Contemplation on the glories of the divine character, and the wonders God hath wrought, issuing in admiring love, adoring gratitude, and fervent praises, inspires the soul at some seasons "with joy unspeaka-"ble, and full of glory." A life of communion with God, an uniform walk in his pleasant ways, an increasing assurance and experience of his love, fill the Christian's peaceful soul with an abiding satisfaction; which nothing greatly interrupts but the stirrings of corruption, the force of temptation, and the imperfection of his obedience. By these at times, guilt burdens his mind, and sorrow oppresses

his heart; yet even godly sorrow itself rather increases than lessens his enjoyment: and if he for a season be unhappy, it is not because he is religious, but because he is no more so. Nor is there any rational satisfaction which he doth not enjoy with more real relish, because with more moderation, than others do: for real religion abridges us of no enjoyment, but that which is irrational, debasing, or inordinate. In short, a flash of lightning, which for a moment interrupts, and then increases, the midnight gloom, bears more comparison to the cheerful genial light of the sun; than the most exquisite gratifications of sin, to those joys which the real diligent christian experiences from day to day. "Come "taste and see how gracious the Lord is, and how "blessed they are who trust in him."

But doth Satan persuade you, that you shall have time enough hereafter? Alas! can you be the dupes of so barefaced an artifice? You know you have no lease of your lives, nor are sure of beholding tomorrow's light. Many as young, as healthy, as vigorous as you, are followed to the tomb. Dare you risk eternal happiness or misery on such a peradventure? Reflect also, that your lives are in the hands of that God, whom your sins have greatly provoked, and your presumptuous impenitency still more. May he not even at this moment be saying, "Thou fool, "this night shall thy soul be required of thee?" Hast thou not, deluded sinner, done enough already to provoke him to it? And shouldst thou slight the present warning, and rush into forbidden pleasure: seriously consider, whether thou mayest not reasonably fear, lest in the midst of some daring provoca-

tion, he should "cut thee off with a stroke!" and "then a great ransom cannot deliver thee."

Dare you flatter yourselves with the presumption of repenting, if not before, yet on a death-bed? Alas, how many are cut off by sudden death! how many bereft of reason by the violence of disease! how many are seized with madness,—incurable madness! how many, I say, perish without one cry for mercy, and eternally curse their folly, in being the dupes of such a delusion! "Surely in vain is the net "spread in the sight of any bird." You evidently see the design of Satan in this temptation: he aims only to lull you into security, till he can plunge you into despair; and then he will insult over you. But even should you have a space given you before death, can you reasonably hope, that God will then give you his grace, which you have so long refused? Are you sure you shall improve those hours? Can you at last, in your own strength, when you are languishing under a violent disorder, overcome all those difficulties which you have considered as next to insurmountable, even with the assistance of divine grace, all the days of your health? Will you need any additional anguish, when your bones are full of strong pain, and nature is even sinking under the load? Can you then be sure that your repentance is real and genuine, when you have no opportunity of bringing it to the trial by the fruits it produces? One instance indeed is recorded of a dying penitent, to show that repentance even in those circumstances is neither impossible nor unavailing; and but one, to teach us that such cases are very rare. To-day, then, make sure of this important concern. "Give

" not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eye-
" lids: deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the
" hunter, and as a bird from the snare of the fowler."

" Remember, therefore, your Creator in the days
" of your youth." Remember your obligations and relations to him, and your offences against him: remember, repent, and seek forgiveness without delay, through that Saviour, who hath promised, that " they who seek him early shall find him."

But, perhaps, this best season is already elapsed with many; and it is too late to exhort them to early repentance. Perhaps some are secretly lamenting: ' My youth hath been spent in vanity and ungodli-
' ness: yea, the prime of life is irrecoverably past,
' and I am growing hoary in the ways of wicked-
' ness: What must I do? Is there nothing for me,
' but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and
' fiery indignation?' Indeed my fellow-sinner, thy case is very deplorable: thy day is almost spent; the night, wherein no man can work, is swiftly approaching: thy work is not begun; yea, all thou hast been doing, during the whole course of thy life, must be as it were undone. Thou must travel back again, with weeping and supplication, all the way thou hast trodden for so many years. Death, judgment and eternity press upon thy unprepared soul: the grave is yawning for thy enfeebled body: and should death seize upon thee ere repentance hath taken place, it had been good for thee, hadst thou never been born. Still, however, thy case is not desperate: though provoked by thy impenitency, the Lord yet renews his compassionate invitations. If then thy heart begin to relent; if remorse embit-

ter thy soul; if thou art at length willing to acknowledge thy offence, and seek his face; come, and cast thyself at his feet, and venture upon his mercy and truth, who saith, "Him that cometh unto me, I will "*in no wise* cast out." If *indeed thou art renewed* to repentance, though "at the ninth, or eleventh "hour, thou shalt be equalled with those who have "borne the heat and burden of the day." Herein lies the danger and the difficulty; but with God all things are possible: he "can change the Ethiopi-"an's skin, and the leopard's spots; and by his "power, even thou who hast been long accustomed "to do evil, mayest learn to do well." Admire then his long suffering, who has borne with thy impenitent disregard of his precepts and promises, his authority and invitations, for forty, fifty, sixty, or seventy years: and has neither cut thee off by death, nor deprived thee of thy much abused reason, nor left thee to utter insensibility. This is distinguishing patience!

Methinks, aged sinner, I see thy relentings, hear thy groans, and witness thy tears, confusion and despondency; whilst the crimes of a long life pass in review before thee, the sword of divine justice is brandished against thee, conscience reproaches, and Satan insinuates that it is now too late. Yea, thou art even inclined once more to listen to his insinuations: and to conclude that there is no hope, and that after such a life thy late repentance and worthless services will never meet with acceptance. But reject this dishonourable thought, resist the lying tempter; when he persuaded thee heretofore, that it was too early in life to repent, he led thee to the

brink of an awful precipice: if he prevail in persuading thee that it is now too late, he pushes thee headlong into everlasting ruin. In both he acts in character, "a liar and a murderer from the beginning."

"God's ways are above our ways, and his "thoughts above our thoughts," and his mercies "are higher than the heavens," else the case of the aged sinner would be desperate. But now, though he will not accept the late repentance, and the feeble obedience of one poor hour, because they merit such a favour; yet for his own name's sake, and through the atonement and intercession of Jesus, he will pardon, justify, and save all that truly repent and believe the Gospel. This discovery of the unspeakable riches of divine love, whilst it gives encouragement to the drooping heart, ought to increase the sinner's remorse for having so neglected and abused a God of such excellency and mercy; and to quicken his diligence, in availing himself of the divine patience, by fleeing for refuge to the hope still set before him. "To-day, if ye will hear his "voice," before to-morrow, embrace his proffered mercy, and harden not your hearts.—And whatever stage of human life you are now arrived at, I can only inculcate the same exhortation. "Behold, "now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day "of salvation;" and suggest the same petition; "So "teach us to number our days, that we may apply "our hearts unto wisdom*." "Whatsoever thy "hand findeth to do, do it speedily," and "with "thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor

* Psalm. xc. 12.

" knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou " goest*." I have shown you that this, of all other, is the most necessary and important work you can find to do: make then no delay, lest " he swear in " his wrath, that you shall never enter into his rest."

* Eccles. ix. 10.

PART. V.

THE MEANS OF REPENTANCE.

In entering on this part of our subject, a formidable objection may be started, and even grounded on what hath already been discoursed upon, against treating on the means of repentance at all. It hath been observed, that repentance is the gift of God to us, the purchase of Christ for us, and the work of the Holy Spirit in us: 'How then" it will be objected, 'can we do any thing towards it? If it please 'God to bestow it upon us, we shall repent without 'difficulty or labour: if not, our labour will be altogether to no purpose.'—It is indeed a certain truth, that repentance is the gift of God, as it has been proved from plain Scriptural testimonies; but it is equally true, and capable of the same proof, that we must diligently labour for it. Nor is there any inconsistency betwixt these distinct views of the subject: they only appear inconsistent to our dark and narrow apprehensions. Upon a similar occasion, the Truth, the Word, and the Wisdom of God saith, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth

"but for that meat, which endureth unto everlasting "life, which the Son of man shall GIVE you*." Christ will give it most freely, but you must labour for it most diligently. Thus the harvest is the gift of God, who giveth seed to the sower; who giveth rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and causeth the earth to yield her increase: yet must the husbandman labour. In both temporal and spiritual concerns, God gives not to the slothful, but to the diligent; and his bounty does not supersede, but encourage our activity.

He works in us, that we may work out our own salvation; he hath appointed means, and commanded us to use them. Obedience is our duty. We ought to use the means, and trust in the Lord to render them effectual; but not to depend on them, or rest in them. They, who seriously desire to repent and turn to God, will manifest their sincerity, by thus using every proper means with diligence and perseverance: nor shall their labour be in vain; "for every one that asketh receiveth, and he that "seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall "be opened." But negligence will detect hypocrites, and justify God in their condemnation. Something then must be done, in order to our being made partakers of repentance: not under the notion of merit, as if we made the purchase, for it is the gift of God: not under the notion of efficacious operation; for it is the work of divine grace: but in order to evidence our integrity in purposing repentance; and that we may be found waiting upon God in the way of his appointment. And though the

* John vi. 27.

means will not effect the end, without efficacious grace: yet they are quite as much calculated to produce the effect, as medicines are to remove sickness, or agriculture to produce the crop, both of which are rendered effectual only by the divine blessing.

I. Then, Consider your ways as David did, "I "thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy "testimonies*." Are you now desirous truly to repent? Retire frequently into your chamber, shun the hurry and dissipation of a crowd, and court solitude, that you may recollect yourselves, and seriously commune with your own hearts. There minutely review your whole past life: with exactness survey your thoughts, words, and actions, ever since the dawn of reason, or from the beginning of recollection. Ask yourselves seriously such questions as these: What have you been scheming, intending, pursuing all your days? What hath been the standard of your judgment, and rule of your conduct? The opinion of men, or the word of God; the fashions of the world, or the example of Christ? What have your affections been fixed on? Have you given God or the world, your heart: I mean your warmest desires, and most devoted attachment? Have you intentionally been pleasing God, or yourselves? Have you been seeking his glory in every thing, or your own ease, interest, gratification, and honour? In what have your time and money been most cheerfully expended? In works of piety and charity; or in gratifying your sensuality, pride, and ambition? Have you been laying up, or aiming to

* Psalm cxix. 59.

lay up, treasures in heaven, or on earth? Have you improved health, prosperity, abilities, and influence, in promoting the glory of God, the interests of piety, and the good of men? Or have you done no good, but mischief with them? Hath God been the delightful subject of your meditations and conversation? Or have you wiilingly and habitually forgotten him, and regarded religious thoughts and converse as insipid and irksome? Hath the sweet work of prayer and praise, the worship of God, and hearing and reading his word, been your pleasure, or your task? Have you been out of your element when thus employed, and found more charms, and experienced more satisfaction, in licentious company or dissipated mirth? Have you habitually reverenced the sacred name of God, hallowed his sabbaths, and frequented his sanctuary with reverence and devotion? Or have you taken his name in vain*, despised his ordinances, polluted his sabbaths, or mocked him with an hypocritical worship?

* By taking the name of God in vain, I do not mean, nor does the Bible mean, merely blasphemy, perjury, and profane swearing; but every jest or expression, which implies want of reverence to the name of God, his word, and sacred things. Almost in all companies, the conversation even though trifling and polluting, is incessantly interlarded with the words, GOD, LORD, CHRIST, and such like; which are formed into hackneyed phrases, and used as mere expletives to adorn a period: or as notes of admiration, approbation, or indignation. Nothing can more fully discover the degree, in which sinful man despises the glorious God, than this general and almost universal practice. Without pleasure, profit, or apparent temptation, in violation of an express command, and in defiance of an awful threatening; that tremendous name, which impresses angels with holy awe, and at which devils tremble, is made man's mere bye-word. But when the

What have your imaginations been? pure and heavenly, or lewd, ambitious, envious, covetous, revengeful, and abominable? What has your discourse been? edifying, serious, and candid; or profane, polluted, trifling, slanderous, and dissembling? What have your tempers been? meek, peaceable, and kind; or turbulent, contentious, and overbearing? Have you behaved, as the word of God directs, in relative life, as parents, children, husbands, wives, masters, or servants? Has equity, disinterestedness, and kindness; or selfishness, covetousness, and fraud, directed your worldly business? Have you in sobriety, chastity, and temperance, governed your appetites and passions?

But I have already exceeded due bounds in this specimen of queries, which you ought with all impartiality to propose to yourselves; allowing conscience, after mature recollection, to return a faithful answer. In short, set the law of God, and the example of Christ, before your eyes, make diligent search into your secret practices, intentions, and inclinations: steadily view your likeness, and estimate your character in this manner, until you know what

affronted JEHOVAH shall at last address the sinner, "Wherefore "hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD?" and he find that God will "not hold him guiltless;" his profane trifling will be at an end; and he will be constrained to tremble at that name he would not reverence.—The inefficacy of much apparent religion, and the worthlessness of much evangelical profession, are demonstrated, by their failing to depress this awful profaneness. All true Christians, who worship God in spirit and truth, are, by that profound veneration they bear to the Lord, cured effectually of this practice; and ought to unite in bearing testimony against it, boldly, in all companies.

manner of persons you are. Shrink not back from that view of self-deformity, which will thus be presented to you: but look, and look again, till you "abhor yourselves, and repent in dust and ashes."

The man, whose circumstances are embarrassed, may possibly retrieve all, if he be content in time to look well into his affairs, and be made sensible how bad they are: but to shrink from this inspection, and to banish reflection, on a disagreeable subject, completes many a man's ruin. Thus multitudes are afraid, or averse, fully to examine their own character, conduct, and state; they flee from reflection, because uneasy and mortifying; and huddle up all in an unexamined obscurity, till they rush blindfold into remediless ruin. But by carefully examining how matters stand betwixt God and our souls, the danger is discovered, the remedy is at hand, and our destruction happily prevented. Shift not then this business: slur it not over, but go through with it, though disagreeable and mortifying: and you will find yourselves amply recompensed, not only by its subserviency to repentance, but to future solid and abiding peace of conscience.

II. Examine your heart and life daily. Nor only say, 'What have I done?' but, 'What am I now 'doing?' "The heart is deceitful above all things, "and desperately wicked, who can know it?" And the Lord pronounces him a "fool, who trusteth in "his own heart." Men retain their good opinion and confidence concerning themselves; because they remain strangers to their own hearts, for want of daily examination: for the only way to discover a concealed villain, is carefully to watch him. Watch

then your own hearts: examine well your own lives: keep before your eyes the requirements of the divine law, as far as known: search the Scriptures daily for further information: review your daily conduct, judging of it by that infallible standard: descend to particulars; to omissions and commissions, words and actions, intentions and imaginations, deficiencies and defilements in duty, and backwardness to it. This will prove of vast importance to self-knowledge, and consequently to self-abasement. Though difficult at first, it will soon become natural and pleasant to the true christian: it will continually keep the heart humble and watchful, and the conscience tender; and dependence on the mercy of God, through the blood of Christ for pardon, in continual exercise. This conduct, like well arranged accounts, will prevent a thousand anxieties and terrors in times of danger and sickness, and at the hour of death. Grudge not, then, this labour, if you are ambitious to be called disciples of Jesus, and do not "judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life."

III. Meditate frequently upon such subjects, as tend to excite and increase in the heart, the sense of the heinousness of sin: labouring with your reluctant minds to bring and keep them close to this exercise. Impenitency is greatly the effect of extenuating notions of the malignity of sin; repentance must then flow from a sense of its hatefulness. It is needless to enumerate the various subjects, which duly meditated upon, may have this effect; and it would lead us into repetitions. Such are the majesty and excellency, authority and law,

threatenings and judgments of God, his righteous severity against sinning angels, against Adam and his whole posterity, against the inhabitants of the old world, against Sodom and Gomorrah, against he nations of Canaan, against the people of Israel, in a variety of instances, especially in the final destruction of Jerusalem, and the continued dispersion of the Jewish nation. All these, and others too numerous for me to mention, are but forerunners and emblems of that everlasting destruction, with which in the future state all they shall be punished, "who "know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our "Lord Jesus Christ." "Now, we know that the "judgment of God is according unto truth:" these awful instances of his tremendous justice, show us his judgment of the evil of sin, and what it really deserves: even *his judgment*, who is LOVE, and delighteth not in the death of a sinner; but punishes solely to express his holy hatred of that abominable thing, which we lodge in our bosom, and in behalf of which we plead. These things were written on purpose to lead us to judge concerning sin, as God judgeth: and this will surely lead us to unfeigned repentance.

IV. Meditate frequently and intensely on the death of Christ. Consider who he was, and what he suffered, and wherefore he suffered. Purposely retire to contemplate this surprising scene; and yield not to weariness or indisposition, till you arrive at some heart-affecting views of a crucified Saviour. Superficial speculations may amuse the fancy, and furnish out conversation: but without deeply examining and well digesting this subject,

and being thus established in judgment concerning it, we can never in habitual experience reconcile godly sorrow with abiding peace and joy in the Lord, or humble repentance with a lively hope of everlasting life. Here that christian, who turns his eyes from other objects, that he may steadfastly look unto Jesus*, will perceive that the awful vengeance of God against sin, before considered, proceeds not from want of love to the persons of sinners, but from abhorrence of moral evil, the effect of a perfect view of its infinite malignity: that this judgment and conduct are essential to his most perfect character, and requisite to his glory as moral Governor of the universe. When, therefore, in boundless love, he determined the salvation of sinners, he would "not spare his own Son;" but would sooner deliver him, "in whom his soul de-"lighted," to the most intense agonies and ignominious death, than leave sin unpunished, or permit his intelligent creatures to remain ignorant of his infinite hatred of it. For the instruction of the whole universe to eternal ages, in these and other important truths respecting the divine character, law, and government, did the Son of God, "suffer once for sins, "the just for the unjust."

Here, likewise, the sinner may learn to estimate the worth of his immortal soul; the vanity of this world; the dangerous situation he is placed in; the difficulty there is in a sinner's salvation, (which cost him, who created and upholds all things by his powerful word, such humiliation and sufferings;) the unspeakable love of God, and his willingness to save sinners; see-

* Heb. xii. 2. αφορωντες.

ing "he hath not withheld his only Son from us." These are lessons, eminently conducive to repentance; and which can be learned to such advantage in no other way, as by "looking unto Jesus," and meditating on his sufferings. He then, who sincerely would repent, must daily retire in contemplation to Gethsemane and Golgotha.

V. Lastly, The whole must be rendered effectual by fervent and importunate prayer, without which all other means will be in vain. Whether we read, or meditate, or examine our lives and hearts, or whatever we do, prayer must accompany all; for it is God who takes away the heart of stone, and gives the heart of flesh, and renews us unto repentance; and him we must earnestly supplicate to bestow on us this good and perfect gift. But alas! it is extremely difficult to prevail upon men to get alone, and on their bended knees, day by day, to beseech the Lord, in the name of Jesus Christ, to work this change in them, and bestow this gift on them. To read, to hear sermons, and other things of a public nature, men may be more easily induced. A mere form or task of devotion, may also be reconciled with a self-sufficient and worldly spirit and conduct: but real prayer stands in direct opposition to them all. It is the very language of indigence and dependence, and earnest longings after God and holiness. In order to pray aright, a man must know, in some measure, how vast and various his wants are; he must understand his true interest and happiness; he must supremely value the favour and image of God. No man can truly pray for spiritual blessings, who doth not carefully review his life, explore his heart, and

in a measure know his own character; who is not in some degree acquainted with the majesty, holiness, and heart-searching knowledge of God, his own absolute dependance upon him, his relations and obligations to him, and offences committed against him; and who is not, in a general way, at least, instructed in the way of access for sinners to an offended God, through the atoning blood of his Son, and humbly willing to approach in this appointed way. Such a one draws near with reverential fear and deep self-abasement, confessing his unworthiness, and imploring forgiveness; encouraged only by believing apprehensions of the rich mercy of God to sinners through the mediation of Jesus. Conscious also of ignorance, weakness, and depravity, in humble sincerity and earnest longings, he pleads the promises of the word of God, and implores the teaching, strengthening, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. Faith, repentance, and universal holiness, he longs for, feels his want of, expects and seeks daily from God in prayer. In all this, his words express, but not fully, the very meaning of his heart. Daily he thus opens and pours out his soul unto God, turning the precepts and promises he reads or hears from the word of God, into fervent petitions. All his sorrows, anxieties, and perplexities, he spreads before the Lord, seeking in every exigence, support, direction, and consolation from him; subjoining continual thanksgivings for mercies received, and intercessions for all around him; and submissively referring himself, in every case, to the will and wisdom of his heavenly Father. "Thus is he careful for nothing, but in every

" thing by prayer and supplication, with thanks-
" givings, makes his requests known unto God;"
" and casts his care upon him, who careth for him."
Such prayer as this cannot be taught by man, but must be the effect of " the pouring out of the Spirit " of grace and supplication;" who communicating divine light to the understanding, and holy dispositions to the heart, excites fervent and spiritual desires in the soul, and teacheth us to pray with " groan-
" ings that cannot be uttered." It is, therefore, called in the word of God, " praying in and by the " Spirit;" as opposed to a " form of godliness," or good words spoken with the mouth, without suitable affections and desires in the heart*. He whose words express more than *he* intends, or heartily desires, prays formally and hypocritically. He who means all his words express, and more than he can find words to express, evidently prays spiritually, and though he may not be sensible of it, is assisted in prayer by the Holy Spirit†.

But if nothing, however specious or ostentatious, be prayer, which has not in it something of this nature, (as I trust, upon mature examination of the

* Saul, previous to conversion, was a strict Pharisee, who made *long prayers;* yet when the Lord spoke of his conversion to Ananias, he said with emphasis, " Behold, he prayeth." Before, he might read or repeat long forms, or pray fluently in extemporaneous language; but now he feels his indigence, dependence, and unworthiness, and really prays with suitable desires and dispositions.

† I am far from thinking that no prayer is accepted, which comes not up to this description; but this is the *nature* of a sinner's praying for spiritual blessings; to this in a degree proportioned to the measure of his grace, a believer attains; and every accepted prayer has something in it of the same nature.

Scripture, will be found the case:) then evidently, the proud, ungodly, and carnal-minded, cannot pray aright. Nor can it be deemed strange, if, when a sinner is *first* seriously impressed with concern for his soul, he hath great reluctancy to this spiritual exercise, and knows not how to go about it. For even real Christians, who are arrived at some measure of stability, and have made considerable proficiency in a life of communion with God, meet with considerable difficulty in this grand concern; have need habitually to be humbled for neglects and imperfections; and want continually fresh supplies of divine assistance to excite, teach, and enable them thus to pray always and not faint.

Satan also will oppose to the uttermost all his artifices, to prevent a sinner's approaching to the throne of grace: well knowing, that in the critical season, when any person is under serious impressions, if he can be prevailed on to neglect prayer, they will soon wear off, and leave the conscience more insensible than before. The business, pleasures, diversions, and society of the world; and that scorn with which ungodly men treat a life of prayer, combine their influence, in aid of natural corruption and Satan's temptation, to keep the poor convinced sinner from the throne of grace. And, as if these hindrances were not sufficient, even some, professing serious godliness, (whose intention may be better than their judgment,) extremely increase the difficulty, by strenuously contending, that unconverted persons ought not to pray, or be exhorted to it*.

* If a man ought not to pray before conversion, he ought to *know*, that is, *be sure*, of his conversion, before he prays; for if he

Such indeed are the pride and ungodliness of man, that left to himself, and under Satan's influence, he never *will* pray in sincerity. Confounding the depraved disinclination with a real want of ability, many thence argue the want of obligation. But this argument, if it prove any thing, proves too much; and would consequently repeal the law and abrogate the Gospel, and furnish the devil himself with an apology, by making inward depravity a justification of outward rebellion: the desperate wickedness of the heart, for the desperate wickedness of the life. For certain it is, that man is as much disinclined to keep the whole law, or to repent and believe the Gospel, as he is to pray; and will never do either one or the other, if left to himself, destitute of the influence of divine grace. But doth this indeed

be not sure of his conversion, he cannot be sure whether he may, and ought to pray or not. Thus *assurance* springs up in a sinner's heart all at once; and now having received he may ask; having found he may begin to seek; the door being opened he may begin to knock!—Surely at first glance every one must see this to be absurd and unscriptural, yea, antiscriptural. Truly all ought to pray, but none will in sincerity, until the Holy Spirit in some degree inclines the heart. Then a man feels an inclination to do that, which before was his duty, though he did it not: frequently he knows not from whence this change proceeds: but is encouraged, by such Scriptures as that before alluded to, (Matt. vii. 7, 8. or Isaiah lv. 6, 7.) "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon "him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way." Thus he begins to ask and seek, and in consequence, to receive and find: in this way giving diligence he makes his calling and election sure: and this statement reconciles all the different views the Scripture gives us of this matter. The Lord seeking us when lost, and being found of us when we sought him not, inclines us, (though we be not aware whence this inclination comes,) to seek him in prayer; and thus we receive all spiritual and eternal blessings in the way of asking and receiving.

justify all our transgressions of the law, and contempt of the Gospel?

Again, prayer is an important part of that worship and obedience which the law requires: and it is also the grand means of receiving from Jesus new covenant blessings. He then, who prays not, at once breaks the law, and contemns the Gospel: "and he "that keeps the whole law, and* *thus* offends in "one point, is guilty of all†." If then a sinner ought not to pray, he is justifiable in breaking the whole law, and equally justifiable in neglecting the salvation of the Gospel! In fact, however, our depraved inclinations are in no respect the measure of our duty, but the direct opposite. "The carnal "mind is enmity against God; is not subject to *the* "*law of God*, nor indeed can be." The law, to which the carnal mind *cannot* be subject, is the measure of our duty. This, men *cannot* obey, because of the depravity of their nature, which enhances instead of extenuating their guilt. Men ought to love God and one another: having sinned, they ought to repent: they ought to believe and pray to deny themselves and mortify their lusts: But they do not. What is the reason? They cannot. But in what sense is this true? In fact, because they dislike God's service, hate his law, reject his authority, despise his Gospel, and prefer the gratification of their lusts: And because these hateful dispositions are so predominant in them, that without the inter-

* Numbers, xv. 30, 31.—"The soul that doeth ought presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord—he hath despised the "Word of the Lord."

† James, ii. 10, 11.

position of omnipotence, they are insuperable. Can these hateful dispositions then be seriously urged as an excuse? Will any dare to urge them at the day of judgment? No, "every mouth will then be stop-"ped, and all the world shall be found guilty before "God." I should not in this place have touched upon this controversial subject, had I not observed how greedily this poison is drunk down, and how fatally it operates in stupefying the conscience, flattering the pride, and apologizing for the sloth of mankind.

Instead of thus abetting, we should endeavour to counteract, these artifices of Satan, and to combat the reluctancy of a sinner's heart, by showing the absolute necessity of prayer unto salvation; enforcing the invitations to the throne of grace; expatiating on the promises made to all who call upon the Lord; explaining the nature of prayer; directing him in the new and living Way, to the throne of grace; answering his objections, obviating his discouragements, representing it as *our* privilege, and unspeakable consolation; and exhorting him to draw near, and share our happiness: for we may be assured that they, who are thus excited to pray, will in due time, "render unto God the praise of making "them to differ."

But I return from this digression. My fellow sinners, you must pray or perish.—Your backwardness to pray, should humble you, and stir you up to overcome it, especially by crying unto the Lord to incline your heart by his grace to love and delight in prayer. Your ignorance should urge you to begin as the disciples did: "Lord teach us to pray."

You must not yield to corruption, temptation, or discouragement, but persevere in prayer with all sincerity and earnestness. If you pray aright, you will be very far from trusting in, or boasting of your prayers; for you will perceive much imperfection and defilement in them. But though humbled on that account, you need not despond; your prayers, though broken, faultering, and feeble, (if you mean what you express, and desire what you ask,) shall meet with acceptance through the intercession of Jesus, and be not only answered, but in due season far exceeded. Especially in this way you must seek repentance, as the gift of God through Jesus Christ; using the other means with diligence, earnestness, and perseverance: and then you will assuredly be made partakers of that "repentance, " which is unto salvation not to be repented of."

CONCLUSION.

HAVING thus gone through the subject, according to the method at first laid down, nothing remains but to close with a few practical observations.

I. I would observe from what has been discoursed, that every species of religion, in which repentance forms no prominent part from first to last, is justly to be suspected, yea, certainly to be condemned, as unscriptural and destructive. There is a great deal of this religion in the world, which often comes recommended by extraordinary zeal for some peculiar doctrines of christianity, and is distinguished by unwarranted confidence and high affections. Men, hearing the Gospel, are superficially alarmed on account of their sins, and eagerly look out for comfort. Through inexperience, they lie open to Satan's artifice, and are easily imposed on with false comfort, deduced from false principles, exactly suited to their carnal unhumbled hearts. Thus they presume that their sins are pardoned, and their state good; and with this presumption, self-love is delighted, and high affections produced: these, expressed in earnest, fluent language, create them injudicious admirers: this flatters and affects them the more, and confirms them in their confidence; so that they think

they must not, on any account, doubt more after such experiences. Yet all this is only a land-flood, that soon subsides. They gradually experience a decay of affection, and grow lifeless, indolent, and worldly: with their affection their confidence declines, but they struggle hard to exclude doubtings: they call themselves backsliders; allow themselves to have forsaken their first loves, and groan out Job's complaint, though not at all in Job's meaning: "O! that it were with me, as in months past." And would a wish suffice, something might be done: but they have no heart for greater exertion. To close all, they abuse the doctrine of final perseverance; take it for granted that they are saints: expect to be restored as it were by miracle, whilst they turn a deaf ear to the voice of Christ, commanding them to "be zealous and repent;" till at length, perhaps, a suitable occasion and temptation presenting themselves, they throw aside their profession of godliness.

This is exactly the religion of the stony-ground hearers, who had faith, confidence, and joy, such as they were, but no repentance or humility*, and therefore no root in themselves; for it is only by renewing our hearts unto repentance, that the ground is prepared for the reception of the seed, and the production of true faith and holiness, as hath already been demonstrated.

* It is very observable how often the words "Every one that "exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself "shall be exalted," are repeated by our Saviour; and how many similar expressions are used by his apostles. This infallibly teaches us, that all appearances of religion are fallacious so long as the heart remains unhumbled.

"Let no man deceive you by vain words." Except you are partakers of repentance, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance, all your religion is vain, your hopes presumptuous, and your destruction inevitable; whatever other attainments, gifts, or experiences you may have to boast of, or to buoy up your confidence. Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, and as effectually ruin souls by false religion, as by open ungodliness; and far more unsuspectedly.

II. I observe from what hath been discoursed, that great care is requisite in distinguishing betwixt true repentance, and that which is superficial and merely natural*. This is of vast importance, as numbers of those who die impenitent, have at times judged themselves, and been thought by others to be penitent. Let it then be remembered, that true repentance, though generally accompanied with terror, tears, confessions, and outward reformation, good words, fair promises, and earnest resolutions, doth

* Some will, perhaps, be disposed to inquire, why I have not adopted the common distinction betwixt *legal* and *evangelical* repentance? as the mode of expression is not scriptural, every one is at liberty to use it or not; and it did not appear to me sufficiently exact or comprehensive for my purpose. True repentance has more respect to the law, as transgressed by sin, and justly condemning the sinner, than any false repentance can have. Whilst, on the other hand, men are more frequently seduced into a dependence on a superficial repentance, by unwarrantable presumptions of mercy, and false apprehensions of evangelical truth, than by slavish regard to the law. *Natural* and *spiritual* repentance seems to me a preferable distinction. By *natural repentance*, I would understand every sort of repentance, a mere natural man is capable of; by *spiritual repentance*, that which springs from true grace in the heart.

not consist in or uniformly attend upon, all or any of them. But true repentance is a change of judgment, inclination, and affection, in respect of sin; immediately accompanied, preceded, or followed by a change of judgment, inclination, and affection respecting God and his law, Christ and his Gospel, ourselves and our conduct, this world and the next. From this change, spring sorrow for sin; self-abasement and condemnation; sole dependence on God's mercy; supreme valuation of Jesus and his salvation; love to God and holiness; tenderness of conscience; zeal for good works; all holy tempers, holy conversation, and holy conduct; accompanied with continual humiliation for remaining imperfections and defilements. Where these effects have been evidently produced, though with little or no terror, no effusions of tears, or seasons of peculiar melting; but gradually and silently; the repentance is yet proved to be sincere and genuine, by this rule—it leads to Christ and holiness. But all other appearances, whether of terror issuing in self-dependence and neglect of Christ; or of supposed evangelical humiliation issuing in professed dependence on Christ and free grace, whilst sin is not abhorred and avoided, nor holiness loved and practised, are superficial and hypocritical. Herod might have passed for a true penitent, if John would have allowed him his Herodias: yet John shall lose his head rather than Herod, notwithstanding promising appearances, will part with his beloved lust; and human nature is just the same in other men as it was in Herod. Let no repentance, therefore, satisfy any man, which doth not endear Christ and universal holiness; and

divorce the heart from every sin, especially that which heretofore was the customary and beloved sin.

III. I would, from what hath been discoursed, take occasion to consider in a few words, the nature and necessity of regeneration. No other religion, but that which hath been described, requires that entire change, which this term and a variety of similar expressions in the sacred scriptures imply. A Pharisee's reformation, morality, and outward worship, require no entire inward renovation; and having no experience of it, nor seeing any occasion for it, with Nicodemus he exclaims, "How can these things "be?" The evangelical or antinomian self-deceiver also may have his opinions, affections, and confidence, without becoming a new creature; and will, therefore, whilst he uses the terms, mistake their import, and signify by them some of those enthusiastical impulses and revelations which he experiences and boasts of.

But self-admiring, self-justifying man will never exercise that self-loathing and self-condemning repentance which hath been described, except he be born again. Insensible to the attractions of heavenly objects through inordinate love of worldly things, he never will renounce and abhor all sin, mortify every lust, die to all carnal objects, and delight in God and universal holiness, except he be changed into a new creature by the efficacious influences of the Holy Spirit: except "old things pass away, and "all things become new."

This is the new birth so frequently spoken of in the sacred Scriptures. A new principle of divine life implanted in the heart, purifying the various

powers of the soul. Hence proceed an enlightened understanding, a sound judgment in divine things, holy affections, a pure imagination, a sanctified memory, and a well-informed, tender, but not superstitious conscience. Hence proceed new fears, new hopes, new joys, new sorrows, new aversions and desires, new dispositions, and a new life. Yet, as these things are in this life only imperfect in their degree; this imperfection of grace, and remainder of corruption, extort from the true Christian bitter complaints; "O wretched man that I am, who shall "deliver me from the body of this death?" they put vigour into his prayers; "Create in me a clean "heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me:" they still find him employment for repentance, and watchfulness; and endear free forgiveness through the blood of Christ.

Sinners should, therefore, be addressed in terms like these—All your aversion to this thorough repentance, and all your delays about it, only demonstrate your need of being born again. Should God implant in your hearts such a new principle of holiness, as would make you relish and take pleasure in divine things, you will find it natural and easy to abhor sin, mourn over it and forsake it; to repent, and do works meet for repentance. Have you then a real desire after this invaluable gift? If you have not, but prefer the quiet satisfaction of your carnal inclinations, you are justly left without that which you so despise. If you have, "Ask and it shall be "given you, seek and you shall find, knock and it "shall be opened unto you. For every one that

" asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and " to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

IV. I now take my leave of impenitent sinners with a serious expostulation. I mean such as are living secretly or openly, in covetousness, injustice, lewdness, drunkenness, profaneness, or any known sin; who remember not to hallow the sabbath, to read the Scriptures, to worship God, to relieve the poor, or who omit any other known duty; or who proudly trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others, and neglect Christ and his salvation. Oh make no more excuses or delays: " Flee " from the wrath to come." " Evil pursueth sin- " ners:" if it overtake you in impenitency, eternal misery is your dreadful portion. Yet, yet a long suffering God has patience with you: the Gospel invites, and Jesus stands with open arms to receive you: complains that you " will not come to him that you " may have life:" affirms with an oath, that " he " hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner;" and, as with tears of compassion, adds, " Turn ye, turn " ye, why will ye die?" Do you then love death? Will ye slight such warnings, such expostulations, such invitations, such compassion? Well, if this prevail not, I must with reluctance leave you, as Paul did the Jews. " Your blood be upon your " own head, I am free."

V. I now turn to thee, poor weeping penitent, who art almost inconsolable, and sinking in despondency. Thou scarcely canst hope that God will pardon so great a sinner; the expectation seems to border on presumption: yet still thy humiliation appears to thyself slight, and thy repentance superficial, and thy

heart insensible: yea, though it is almost melted within thee, it feels like a very stone; and still thou pleadest, "Oh take away the heart of stone, and give "the heart of flesh." Behold, I bring thee glad tidings of great joy; and I shall share thy joy, if I may but be the instrument of administering peace and comfort to thee: "Come unto me," saith Jesus, "all "ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give "you rest." Behold, he calleth thee: be of good courage. All who will, may come; he hath given thee the willing mind, "and will in no wise cast thee out." He will bind up thy broken heart, and "give thee "the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of "praise for the spirit of heaviness." Only wait his time: let him probe thy wounds to the bottom: catch not impatiently at comfort: beg for still deeper humiliation: use every means of increasing thy abhorrence of, and watchfulness against sin; and it shall not be very long before "he will shed abroad "his love in thy heart," and cause thee to "abound "in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." In the mean time reflect, that whilst thou art mourning on earth, heaven resounds with joyful acclamations and praises on thy account: wait then and pray, and thou shalt, ere long, rejoice and praise too, and that for ever.

VI. But some perhaps will say, I have not this work to do now, I repented many years ago.—What! art thou still a sinner, and hast thou no need to repent! The true Christian can indeed thankfully say, my repentance is effectually begun: but only the saint in glory can truly say, my repentance is finished. The more a true believer knows of God and

Christ, and the law and Gospel; and the larger his experience is of his own depravity and the Lord's goodness; the more he hates sin, the more he recollects his former sins, the quicker sense he hath of present sinfulness, and the deeper and purer is his repentance. He rejoices in the Lord with penitent joy, and mourns for sin with sweet and joyful mourning. His humility increases his thankfulness and admiration of the love of Christ, and enhances his consolation; for it is a pleasant thing to be thankful. But if the thought that thy sins were pardoned, finished thy repentance, and dried up thy tears, thy repentance needs repenting of, and thou art awfully deceived.

Finally. My fellow-christians, let us frequently renew our recollection of former sins, our self-examination, our meditations on those subjects which first excited our abhorrence of iniquity: especially our meditations on a bleeding Saviour. Let us daily renew our acceptance of Christ in all his offices, seeking forgiveness of our daily transgressions through his blood: and exercising ourselves to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and man. Thus, as true penitents, endeavouring to glorify God, adorn the Gospel, and serve our generation; we may hope to live in comfort, die in peace, and have "an entrance ministered to us abundantly, into "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Sa-"viour Jesus Christ."

APPENDIX.

CONCERNING HALLOWING THE SABBATH.

THROUGHOUT this Discourse, it hath been supposed, that there is in force a divine mandate of hallowing the sabbath, which all are bound to obey, and contract guilt by neglecting. But the change in the dispensation, since the fourth commandment was given; the alteration of the day, from the seventh to the first of the week; and the manner that alteration was introduced, have afforded some persons an occasion of arguing against the obligation: the judgments of others seem unsettled, and perplexed about it: and those who profane the sabbath, are by these things furnished with some plausible excuse, and preserved from remorse of conscience on that account. For these reasons, I judged it might be useful, to subjoin a few brief hints upon the subject.

I. It should be noticed, that the sabbath was appointed long before the ceremonial law, even from the creation of the world; and therefore cannot, in its own nature, be ceremonial*. That the words of

* Gen. ii. 1—3.

Moses should thus be understood, may be confirmed by the prohibition of gathering manna on the seventh day*, previous to giving any part of the law. The very language of the fourth commandment, "*Remember* the sabbath day to keep it holy," as well as the reason assigned in the close, evinces the same. And this is corroborated and illustrated by the general custom in many nations through revolving ages, of computing time by weeks, or periodical returns of the seventh day. Of this fact no reason can be assigned so satisfactory, as supposing it to be the effect of an original institution, handed down by tradition amongst all the descendants of Adam and Noah: which continued even after the appointment that gave rise to it was forgotten†.

II. The observation of the sabbath, being made a part of the Mosaic dispensation, is interwoven with the whole system. It is enjoined in the moral law of the ten commandments, as delivered from Mount Sinai; introduced in the midst of their positive institutions; and enforced by temporal punishments, to be executed by civil authority. This shows its importance; and evinces that it partakes of the excellency of the moral law; forms an eminent part, and is fundamental to the maintenance, of all instituted worship; is typical of and preparatory for the heavenly sabbath; and on every account is proper to be enforced by the authority of the magistrate;

* Exod. xvi.

† The pains taken, by express edicts and by a new division of time, in a neighbouring nation, to form an exception to this rule, by men who are avowed enemies to Christianity, may help to show the force of this argument.

who may not draw his sword to propagate systems of doctrine or formulas of worship, but may and ought to use his authority to repress immorality and profaneness, and to promote the public worship of God in the land.—The substance of this commandment is of a moral nature. To separate some known, stated, and periodical portion of our time to religious purposes, when all other engagements being postponed, men should assemble to worship God, and learn his will; is evidently an appointment resulting from the reason and nature of things. The glorious perfections of God; the rational nature of man; our relations and obligations to our Creator, Benefactor, Governor, and Judge; the honour he requires, and we owe him; our relations to each other, as social creatures, who can instruct, assist, affect, and animate one another, by joining together in one common exercise; and our situation in such a world as this; all render such an ordinance indispensable. Repeal this commandment; prohibit this practice: you render public religion a matter of indifference, or you destroy it. Such a repeal or prohibition implies an absurdity; which cannot be said of the repeal or prohibition of any ceremonial precept. The honour and worship of God, the interests of religion and morality, and the best happiness of mankind, would be inadequately provided for without such an observance.

III. We cannot, indeed, from the reason and nature of things, demonstrate, that exactly one day in seven, and neither more nor less, is required for this moral duty. But the plain matter of fact, that God hath under every dispensation allotted that

proportion invariably, amounts to the fullest demonstration, that infinite Wisdom judged it the best possible. And experience proves, that the conscientious observance of this proportion does not interfere with the advantageous management of either agriculture, manufactures or commerce; is exceedingly favourable to the cause of liberty and humanity; tends greatly to civilize mankind as social creatures; and fully suffices for maintaining and advancing religion in the world as far as it is generally and strictly observed.

IV. But whether the day to be observed be the first, or the last, or any other of the seven, is evidently in itself indifferent. Only some one day must be pitched upon, either by him that gives, or him that receives the law. Nothing can be more reasonable, than that the Lawgiver should determine this matter, and all his subjects acquiesce. Nothing more desirable than to be, by his determination delivered from uncertainty and disputation about it. But if he, who instituted one day, afterwards change it for another, his authority demands our submission. He, who from the creation appointed the seventh day in remembrance of its completion, appears to have changed that day for the first, when an event had taken place of still greater consequence to fallen sinners. We now every week commemorate the triumphant resurrection of our divine Redeemer. To avoid needlessly shocking Jewish prejudices, this, (as some other changes,) in the wisdom of God, was effected, silently and gradually by example, not by express precept. As Christians, all seem to have observed the first day of the week; the Jewish con-

verts were connived at in observing the seventh also, together with circumcision, and their other ceremonies. Our risen Lord repeatedly met, and spake peace to his disciples, who on the first day of the week were assembled, if not the first time, yet, probably, afterwards, by some intimation from him. It appears to have been on the first day of the week, when the disciples being of one accord in one place, the Holy Ghost came visibly and audibly among them. On the first day of the week, they met to break bread, as well as to hear the word preached. On the first day of the week, they were directed to lay by for the poor, as God had prospered them in the preceding week. St. John dignifies this day with the title of "The Lord's Day," which name alone shows in what manner, and to what purposes, it should be observed. The *first* is the only day of the seven mentioned afterwards in the Scripture, by way of favourable distinction; sabbaths being spoken of as abrogated ceremonies. And ecclesiastical and civil history, with concurring evidence, represent it as the distinguishing practice of Christians, in all ages and nations ever since, to observe this day as sacred to religion.

V. Having determined its obligation, let us briefly consider how it should be hallowed. The Lord of the sabbath hath himself repeatedly allowed of works of necessity and mercy: and in thus relaxing the rigour of the ceremonial part of the commandment, hath enforced the moral part, and implicitly prohibited all other works. But works of necessity must be so in reality, not in pretence. Settling accounts, writing letters of business or on common subjects,

paying labourers, making provision for the indulgence of pride and luxury, with many other things of this kind, which create so much '*necessary*' work for the Lord's Day, are as bad and even worse than keeping open shop, or working at a trade, though less scandalous. No works which are done out of covetousness, pride, or luxury, can consist with hallowing a day to the Lord. Committing known sin in serving Satan, and to employ the Lord's Day in Satan's service, proves a man his faithful, willing, and indefatigable servant. Diversions and trifling visits, (and indeed, all visits, whose direct object and tendency is not to glorify God and edify one another,) are inconsistent with hallowing the sabbath. But men have no leisure on other days: that is to say, they have so much to do in the world, and for their bodies, that six days are too little; and so little to do about their souls, and for God, that one day is too much: and therefore they must borrow time from the latter to eke out the former. Idleness is as bad or worse: for it implies that we have nothing to do with spiritual things, or with and for God; or nothing worth doing. But indeed, we have enough important, profitable, and pleasant work to do on that day. That holy day we ought to honour and delight in, not doing our own pleasure, nor speaking our own words thereon. Extraordinary diligence and earnestness in searching the Scriptures; examining our hearts and lives, our state and conduct; meditation and secret devotion; if we have families, instructing and praying for and with them; and repeatedly attending on public ordinances, will, even with early rising, require most

of this holy day. Edifying conversation, joined with social worship, and acts of charity to the bodies and souls of men, demand all the remainder, that can be spared from unavoidable avocations.—He, who values his immortal soul, or has any love to God, desire of his favour, delight in his service, or zeal for his glory, will not complain of being required thus to hallow one day in seven, as if it were a galling Yoke; but will complain of himself, if depraved nature seem weary: and he will deem it the best and most pleasant day in the week.

The general profanation of the Lord's day, proves the dislike men have for religion, and the contempt they have for the authority and commandment of the Lord. Of those who pay decent respect to the day, multitudes, we allow, are formal hypocrites; and Christians indeed serve God every day: but shall we, on such pretences, undervalue this divine appointment? God forbid!—That degree of reverence, small as it is, which is now paid to the Christian sabbath, is so far a public protestation against atheism, infidelity and profaneness; and a profession of Christ's religion, which puts public honour upon God and his worship. All business being by appointment suspended; servants, labourers, mechanics and tradesmen, that is, the bulk of mankind, have leisure and opportunity to assemble, and hear the word of God; and faith comes by hearing. Multitudes crowd the places where the word of God is preached, and many are converted. True Christians being sanctified but in part, lose much of the vigour of their affections, by their unavoidable intercourse with the world; which decays are repaired.

together with an increase of knowledge and grace, by statedly and seriously hallowing the sabbath. Could we but witness the universal hallowing of the sabbath, we might reasonably hope for a proportional increase of real religion.—Were it totally neglected, profaneness, ignorance, and infidelity, we may confidently foretel, *would*; barbarity, tyranny, and slavery, probably *might*, deluge the world. Let impartial judges then determine, from this imperfect sketch, who are the best friends of mankind; they who would tolerate and vindicate the profanation of the Sabbath, or they who would enforce its strict observance.

With great satisfaction, I would add in closing this subject, the words of a celebrated writer, who has, with great effect employed his talents in the cause of practical christianity*:

'Let us appeal' (says he,), to that day which is especially devoted to the offices of religion: do they' (the bulk of nominal Christians,) 'joyfully avail themselves of this blessed opportunity of withdrawing from the business and cares of life, when, without being disquieted by any doubt whether they are not neglecting the duties of their proper callings, they may be allowed to detach their minds from earthly things, that by fuller knowledge of heavenly objects, and a more habitual acquaintance with them, their hope may grow more "full of immortality?" Is the day cheerfully devoted to those holy exercises for which it was appointed? Do they indeed "come into the courts of God with

* See a Practical View of Christianity, by William Wilberforce, Esq. M. P.

" gladness!" and how are they employed when not
' engaged in the public services of the day? Are
' they busied in studying the word of God, in medi-
' tating on his perfections, in tracing his provident-
' tial dispensations, in admiring his works, in revol-
' ving his mercies, (above all, transcendent mercies
' of redeeming love,) in singing his praises " and
" speaking good of his name?" Do their secret re-
' tirements, witness the earnestness of their prayers
' and the warmth of their thanksgivings, their dili-
' gence and impartiality in the necessary work of
' self-examination, their mindfulness of the benevolent
' duty of intercession? Is the kind purpose of the
' institution of a Sabbath answered by them, in its
' being made to their servants and dependents a
' season of rest and comfort? Does the instruction
' of their families, or of the more poor and ignorant
' of their neighbours, possess its due share of their
' time? If blessed with talents or with affluence, are
' they sedulously employing a part of this interval
' of leisure, in relieving the indigent, and visiting
' the sick, and comforting the sorrowful, in forming
' plans for the good of their fellow-creatures; in
' considering how they may promote the temporal
' and spiritual benefits of their friends and acquaint-
' ance; or if their's be a larger sphere, in devising
' measures whereby, through the divine blessing,
' they may become the honoured instruments of the
' more extended diffusion of religious truth? In the
' hours of domestic or social intercourse, does their
' conversation manifest the subject, of which their
' hearts are full? Do their language and demeanour
' show them to be more than commonly gentle, and

'kind, and friendly; free from rough and irritating 'passions?

'Surely an entire day should not seem long amidst 'these various employments. It might well be 'deemed a privilege thus to spend it, in the more 'immediate presence of our heavenly Father, in the 'exercises of humble admiration and grateful hom-'age; of the benevolent, and domestic, and social 'feelings, and of all the best affections of our nature, 'prompted by their true motives, conversant about 'their proper objects, and directed to their noblest 'end; all sorrow mitigated, all cares suspended, all 'fears repressed, every angry emotion softened, 'every envious or revengeful, or malignant passion 'expelled; and the bosom thus quieted, purified, en-'larged, ennobled, partaking almost of a measure 'of the heavenly happiness, and become for a while 'the seat of love, and joy, and confidence, and har-'mony.

'The nature, and uses, and proper employments 'of a Christian Sabbath, have been pointed out more 'particularly, not only because the day will be found 'when thus employed, eminently conducive, through 'the divine blessing, to the maintenance of the re-'ligious principle in activity and vigour; but also 'because we must all have had occasion often to 'remark, that many persons, of the graver and more 'decent sort, seem not seldom to be nearly destitute 'of religious resources. The Sunday is with them, 'to say the best of it, a *heavy* day, and that larger 'part of it, which is not claimed by the public offices 'of the church, dully drawls on in comfortless va-'cuity; or without improvement, is trifled away in

vain and unprofitable discourse.—Not to speak of those who by their more daring profanation of this sacred season, openly violate the laws and insult the religion of their country; how little do many seem to enter into the *spirit* of the institution, who are not wholly inattentive to its exterior decorums! How glad are they to qualify the rigour of their religious labours! How hardly do they plead against being compelled to devote the *whole* of the day to religion, claiming to themselves no small merit for giving up to it a part, and purchasing, therefore, as they hope, a right to spend the remainder more agreeably! How dexterously do they avail themselves of any plausible plea for introducing some week-day employment into the Sunday, whilst they have not the same propensity to introduce any of the Sunday's peculiar employment into the rest of the week! How often do they find excuses for taking journeys, writing letters, balancing accounts, or in short doing something, which by a little management might probably have been anticipated, or which, without any material inconvenience, might be postponed. Even business itself is recreation, compared with Religion, and from the drudgery of this day of Sacred Rest, they fly for relief to their ordinary occupations.

'Others again who would consider business as a profanation, and who still hold out against the encroachments of the card table, get over much of the day, and gladly seek for an innocent resource in the social circle, or in family visits, where it is not even pretended that the conversation turns on such topics as might render it in any way condu-

cive to religious instruction or improvement. Their families meanwhile are neglected, their servants robbed of Christian privileges, and their example quoted by others who cannot see that they are themselves less religiously employed, while playing an innocent game at cards, or relaxing in the concert room.

'But all these several artifices *whatever they may be, to unhallow* the Sunday and to change it's character, (it might be almost said "to relax it's horrors,") prove but too plainly, however we may be glad to take refuge in religion, when driven to it by the loss of every other comfort, and to retain as it were, a reversionary interest in an asylum which may receive us when we are forced from the transitory enjoyments of our present state, that *in itself* it wears to us a gloomy and forbidden aspect, and not a face of consolation and joy: that the worship of God is with us a *constrained* and not a *willing* service, which we are glad, therefore, to abridge, though we dare not omit it.'

A

TREATISE

ON

GROWTH IN GRACE,

WITH REFERENCE TO

ST. PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE PHILLIPPIANS.

(PHIL. i. 9—11.)

"Grow in Grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."—2 PET. iii. 18.

SECOND AMERICAN EDITION.

THE substance of this discourse was at first published, as an occasional sermon; and though the author has bestowed some pains to give it the form of a treatise, he is aware that he has in a measure failed in the attempt, and that the style and manner of a sermon still predominate. But whatever be the form, he most cordially, after *many* years, sets his seal to the instruction; and he has neither health, spirits, nor leisure to new model it.

INTRODUCTION.

The apostle Paul was evidently a man of strong passions and peculiar sensibility; and being by divine grace exceedingly filled with love to the Lord Jesus, and to the souls of men, his mind was affected with the most lively emotions of joy or sorrow, hope or fear, according to the tidings which he received from the churches with which he had any peculiar connexion. At one time he complains, that "he "has no rest in his flesh," "is filled with heaviness," and "can no longer forbear;" and that "he writes "out of much affliction and anguish of heart, with "many tears:" at another, he declares, "that he "is filled with comfort, and is exceedingly joyful in "all his tribulation, being comforted by the faith of "his beloved children; for now," says he, "we "live if ye stand fast in the Lord." He seems indeed to intimate, that these were "things which con- "cerned his infirmities:" and doubtless this sanguine disposition requires much correction and regulation by divine grace; but, when it is thus tempered, and counterbalanced by proportionable humility, wisdom, patience, and disinterestedness, it may be considered as the main spring of a minister's activity. And as these united qualifications certainly conduced

very much to the apostle's extraordinary usefulness, so they render his epistles peculiarly interesting to us, in all our inquiries concerning the best method of promoting the enlargement and prosperity of the church, and the edification of the disciples of the Lord Jesus.

Among other peculiarities of his manner, it especially suits our present purpose to notice the animated glow of joy and affection, with which he addresses his Christian brethren.—Thus, when writing to the Philippians, he abruptly breaks forth, "I "thank my God upon every remembrance of you; "always in every prayer of mine for you all, ma- "king request with joy." From the same fulness of heart, he afterwards adds, "Many walk of whom I "have told you often, and now tell you, even weep- "ing, that they are enemies to the cross of Christ; "whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, "and whose glory is in their shame; who mind "earthly things*."

There are, alas! too many professors of the Gospel in most places, whose conduct would constrain a believer of far less gracious sensibility than holy Paul, to weep at every recollection of them; but there are others also, on whose account we ought "to bless God without ceasing, whilst we remember "their work of faith, and labour of love, and pa- "tience of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ†." Every faithful and affectionate pastor, therefore, will find cause for alternate sorrow and joy, while he reflects on the people, among whom he hath been called to labour.

* Philip. iii. 18, 19. † 1 Thess. i. 3.

But, while the apostle saw great cause for thankfulness on account of what the Lord had done for the Philippians yet he was equally disposed to pray for them continually; not only, lest they should decline in zeal and diligence, but likewise that they might make still greater progress in every thing pertaining to genuine christianity. "For God," says he, "is my record, how greatly I long after you all "in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, "that your love may abound yet more and more, "in knowledge and in all judgment: that ye may "approve things that are excellent; that ye may be "sincere and without offence, till the day of Christ; "being filled with all the fruits of righteousness, "which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glo-"ry of God*." And in the subsequent parts of the epistle, he copiously and pathetically exhorts them to follow after all those very things, for which he had most fervently prayed in their behalf.

These remarks on the writings of St. Paul, may suggest some reflections, which are suited to introduce the subject of this treatise. A great part of that obscurity and confusion, which pervade the discourses of many persons on religious topics, arises from inattention to the different characters of those, concerning whom the sacred writers speak, or to whom they address their instructions. In all endeavours to do good to the souls of men, it is especially necessary, that we should "rightly divide the "word of truth," and apply it to men's hearts and consciences, according to their various characters

* Phil. i. 8—11.

and situations; for the portion which suits one may be as improper for another, as the same medicine is for persons labouring under diseases of a contrary nature. If, therefore, the wise attention of the sacred writers to this important concern be overlooked by their readers; there will be the greatest reason to fear, lest they should wrest even the words of inspiration to their own destruction.

Every man who will take the pains to examine, must be convinced, that the apostles addressed themselves to idolaters, careless sinners, bigotted Jews, proud Pharisees, profane scoffers, or hypocritical abusers of the Gospel, in a manner adapted to their several cases: that they employed very different language, and used far other topics, when they were instructing serious inquirers, encouraging broken-hearted penitents, or "restoring, in the "spirit of meekness, such as had been overtaken in "a fault;" and that they brought forward instructions and exhortations of a different nature, when they wrote to established believers; or to those who had newly embraced the Gospel, and were full of zeal, but in danger of being misled by false teachers, or drawn aside by manifold temptations.

It is, therefore, evident that the exhortations of the apostles, and their prayers for the progress of their people in holiness, are entirely consistent with the doctrines of grace, for which they in other parts most zealously contend: seeing they have an exclusive reference to persons, who, "having been justi-"fied by faith, had peace with God through our "Lord Jesus Christ;" "in whom they had redemp-"tion through his blood, even the forgiveness of

" their sins, according to the riches of his grace." For the Lord had " saved them, and called them " with an holy calling, not according to their own " works, but according to his own purpose and " grace, given them in Christ Jesus before the world " began;" and the security of the new covenant engaged to them, that they should " be kept by the " power of God, through faith unto salvation." In imitation, therefore, of this example, and with a most zealous attachment to the same doctrines, the ministers of Christ should now also exhort those, whom, with heart-felt satisfaction, they regard as true believers, to follow after every branch of that holiness which the apostles most pathetically recommended to their beloved children: and assuredly we are deeply criminal, if we cease to pray for them in the same style and manner.

The ensuing treatise being especially intended for the benefit of those, who make a credible profession of the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, nothing will be spoken of those doctrines, in a way of controversy, or explanation; and very little addressed to such as do not believe them. The particular subject of inquiry will be *in what that growth in grace, and progress in the divine life consist*, to which the apostles so strenuously and repeatedly exhort their Christian brethren? And on what account, they were so earnest about these things, with those of whose conversion and salvation they had the fullest confidence? It may, however, be requisite to make a few more introductory remarks.

1. The frequent and fervent prayers; with which the instructions of the inspired writers are inter-

spersed, decidedly prove, that 'all holy desires, all 'good counsels, and all just works,' are from God; as our Liturgy well expresses it: or, in the still more emphatic language of inspiration, that "every "good gift, and every perfect gift is from above; "and cometh down from the Father of lights."—Indeed, every prayer for wisdom, holiness, or ability to perform good works, evidently implies, that communications from the Fountain of perfection are necessary in order to render us wise or holy; that we are warranted to expect such communications, notwithstanding our unworthiness; and that we ought to desire, seek, and depend on them, in all our undertakings. They, therefore, who form higher notions of the native powers, resources, and excellencies of fallen man, must be very inconsistent in presenting prayers to this effect: and their religion must be very different from that of the primitive believers, who expected every good gift from the Father of lights, through Jesus Christ, and by the supply of his Spirit. From the fulness of the divine Saviour, they all received: that fulness still remains unexhausted and undiminished; and would we emulate their superior attainments, imitate their bright examples, or aspire to a large measure of their usefulness, the way is plainly marked out to us in the words of our Lord to his apostles;—"He that abid-"eth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing*."

But the apostles did not deem prayers, in behalf of their brethren, incompatible with exhortations to

* John. xv. 5.

them, as their constant practice proves. Many professors of the Gospel express their astonishment, that their opponents cannot find the doctrines of grace in the sacred Scriptures; and it is indeed a just subject of surprise, for they are written there as with a sun-beam. But is it not equally so, that any man, who seems to reverence and to examine the word of God, should overlook all the exhortations and admonitions with which it abounds, as if they had never been written, or as if we had no concern in them? Yet this is actually the case: numbers are sure to object against every attempt to bring them forward, and to apply them with energy to the hearts and consciences of those, who are attached to the doctrines of grace, though without doubt they are, as much as these, a part of the "counsel of God," and as strongly marked in Scripture.—Many allowances indeed must be made, for a variety of prejudices, yet it should be remembered, that the *pretended* mother consented to have the child divided: whilst the *real* parent, in unfeigned affection, rather chose to risk the loss of her son, than to accede to such a proposal*. When professed Christians are thus disposed to mutilate the Scriptures, it may be reasonably suspected that they do not cordially love them: but he, who from his heart says to the Lord, "thy word is very pure, therefore thy "servant loveth it," loves every part of the sacred volume, *because* it is all very pure: and even when he meets with passages, which excite his fears lest he should come short of the promised blessings; he does not reject or turn from them on that account;

* 1 Kings iii. 26.

but meditates on them till he becomes more watchful, diligent, and fervent in prayer: and thus he finds that the whole of the word of God "does good to him that walketh uprightly."

2. The exhortations of the apostles were principally addressed to such as they believed to be real Christians, children of God and heirs of heaven: and their prayers related to their spiritual growth and proficiency. Hence we may certainly conclude, that there is something in christianity, both desirable and attainable, beyond, or distinct from the present comfort and the eternal salvation of the individuals who have already embraced it. Indeed the salvation of one soul is an object of such magnitude, that no temporal interest is worthy to stand in competition with it; but the glory of God, in the credit and success of the gospel, and the everlasting state of immense multitudes as connected with it, are beyond comparison more important. That *selfishness*, however, which is natural to fallen creatures, does not yield to any system of doctrine; unless it be accompanied by the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit; but if a person can satisfy himself with the hope of his own salvation, without any habitual regard to the honour of the Gospel, or the eternal interests of other men, he is *entirely selfish*, and as evidently destitute of the mind and spirit of Christ, as the man, who, enjoying his own abundance, cares not how many are pinched with want, even though they suffer through his injustice and oppression.

It is the constant aim and fervent desire of all the faithful and well-instructed ministers of Christ, to excite the minds of their beloved people to a generous

regard for the credit of the Gospel, and a compassionate longing after the conversion of sinners: and the design of this treatise is to concur with their endeavours for this purpose; and to stir up the pure minds of believers, "by way of remembrance;" in hopes that thus, they may be induced and directed to "let their light shine" more abundantly "before "men; that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father who is in heaven*:" or in other words, "to grow in grace and in the knowledge of "our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—To him be "glory, now and for ever. Amen."

* Matt. v. 16.

SECTION I.

The particulars, in which the true believer's growth in grace consists; as far as they are explicitly contained in St. Paul's prayer for the Philippians.

GROWTH implies the *existence* of all those things, in which an increase is experienced, perceived, or expected; so that the persons, for whom the subsequent discussion is especially intended, are supposed to possess, in some measure, all those graces of holy dispositions, in which a further growth is represented to be highly desirable and actually attainable. In considering the subject, it would not perhaps be found expedient to examine *exclusively* any single exhortation or prayer contained in the sacred writings; or to adhere to the method, which a strict regard to a system might impose. It is, however, proposed in this section to confine our attention to the prayer which St. Paul offered in behalf of the Philippians; except as other Scriptures will be adduced in proof or illustration of the several particulars, which thus pass under our consideration. In the subsequent part of the treatise some other subjects will be noticed, which seem requisite to complete the design, but are not conveniently reducible to any of the clauses of this comprehensive text*. I would

* Phil. i. 9—11.

only further premise, that the prayers offered by the sacred writers, when under the immediate influence of the divine Spirit, are peculiarly suited to show us the real nature of that proficiency in genuine christianity, which their benevolent and zealous minds so ardently longed to behold in their beloved people, as above all things conducive to their true prosperity, and the glory of their God and Saviour. And in some respects they may perhaps be more adapted to produce conviction in every mind, than exhortations or precepts can be: because they convey the same instruction without giving so much offence, with less appearance of assuming authority, and with more conciliating demonstration of affection and good-will.

1. "This," says the apostle, "I pray, that your "LOVE may abound yet more and more." The holy Scriptures speak of *love* in the most exalted terms: "Love is of God: and every one that loveth is born "of God, and knoweth God: he that loveth not, "knoweth not God, for GOD IS LOVE." "He that "dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in "him." "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "The "end of the commandment," or of the revelation made by the Lord to sinful men, (παραγγελιας,) "is "love, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, "and of faith unfeigned*." "Nothing availeth in "Christ Jesus, but faith, which worketh by love." "And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; "but the greatest of these is love." *Faith* alone, justifies the sinner, as forming his relation to Christ; and by faith alone the Christian receives all needful

* 1 Tim. i. 5.

grace from his fulness. Hope of eternal glory, grounded on the promises of God and sealed by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, is the anchor of the soul, and the helmet of salvation: but LOVE is the substance of that holiness and felicity to which we are recovered through faith and hope. The scaffolding is indispensably necessary at the time: but when the edifice is completed, the scaffolding is taken down as an encumbrance. Thus faith will be lost in sight, and hope swallowed up in enjoyment, when love shall be brought to perfection; but love will remain for ever, the temper, the employment, and happiness of heaven itself.

Love is indeed that distinguishing essential of true religion,

> "Which hypocrites could ne'er attain,
> Which false apostates never knew;"

for "every one that loveth is born of God." This declaration cannot mean that sinful men are in every sense incapable of *love;* but only that they cannot exercise that affection in a holy manner, according to the law of God. For love is the ruling passion of the soul, and gives the direction to all the rest: but in our present disordered state, it is become incapable of fixing on its proper objects, and is, therefore, prostituted to such as are worthless or abominable. An unholy heart cannot love holiness; "the "carnal mind is enmity against God," and cannot be subject to his holy law, or view with delight any object that bears his image. Some kind of gratitude may be felt or manifested by an unregenerate sinner, when his inclinations are gratified, when im-

pending danger is averted, or when he presumptuously deems himself an heir of salvation; and he may have an instinctive benevolence towards men, without any suitable regard to God.

Yet these do not constitute that love, of which the apostle spoke in such exalted terms: though gratitude and benevolence, when they spring from proper principles, may be ranked among the most important of its exercises.—But the holy character of God, with all that immediately relates to him, or bears the stamp of his moral perfections, is the object of our proud aversion and contempt; discoveries of the divine glory and excellence excite proportionable enmity; nor can any benefits overcome our dislike to the holiness of our Benefactor, so long as we continue unregenerate. "So then, they that are in "the flesh cannot please God."

In regeneration, however, a capacity of spiritual perception is communicated to the soul, in a *manner* which we can neither explain nor comprehend; and we are by it enabled to discern the holy excellence and beauty of heavenly things. This produces a revolution in our judgment and affections: "old "things pass away, behold, all things become new;" our love is now divorced, as it were, from its former base attachments; and we gradually learn to esteem, admire, choose, and delight in that spiritual excellence, which was before the object of our aversion and contempt. The heart, now become in some degree *holy*, proportionably loves holy persons and holy things; we are spiritually minded, and habitually seek our pleasure in spiritual pursuits and employments.—This *capacity* of spiritual perception, is

not a new *faculty* added to the soul; but the ability of exercising every faculty, which God hath given us, in a suitable manner, about the grand concerns of religion; for which our apostacy from our Creator, and idolatrous attachment to the creature had wholly disqualified us. It is, therefore, represented in Scripture by images taken from our bodily senses: the regenerate soul *sees* heavenly beauty, *hears* divine harmony, *smells* fragrancy as of "ointment "poured forth," and *tastes* sweetness as of "honey "and the honey-comb." Yet these perceptions in the new convert are feeble and indistinct; and often almost over-borne, and swallowed up in the tumult of natural passions, and the conflict with carnal propensities: they, however, uniformly influence him, as "a new-born babe, to desire the sincere milk of "the word, that *he may grow thereby*, seeing that he "has tasted that the Lord is gracious*." And they constitute that "leaven," which will gradually diffuse its influence, "till the whole be leavened;" till all the faculties, affections, and operations of the soul be made to partake of the same holy nature and tendency.

When we are thus made capable of perceiving in some degree the beauty and glory of the divine perfections, and of forming some proper estimate of our obligations and relations to our Creator and Benefactor; we are brought to consent to his holy law, that it is good, and that its commands, though very strict and spiritual, are reasonable, equitable, and beneficial: and the view of the evil of sin, thus ob-

* 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3.

tained, though it is imperfect, produces a submission to the justice of God in the condemnation of transgressors. Other discoveries of our guilt and danger, and of the wrath to which we are exposed, may alarm us; but nothing short of this can produce genuine humiliation and self-abasement; which will be matured and increased by fuller views of the glory of God in the person and salvation of Jesus Christ.

For did we only contemplate the perfection of God, as displayed in the works of creation and providence, or illustrated by the justice of his law and government; our consciousness of guilt and pollution would so discourage us, nay, lead us to the borders of despair, that we should be induced to struggle earnestly against conviction, and to oppose the humiliating effect of every discovery of God, which we were unable to exclude. But when we are led to perceive, along with our views of the odiousness and desert of our sins, the glory of God in the harmonious display of all his attributes, through the person and redemption of his Son: this allays our terrors, inspires our hope, and fixes our attention; while it exceedingly increases humiliation and self-abasement.—The dignity of the divine Redeemer, the nature of his undertaking, the immensity of his compassionate and condescending love, the perfection and value of his righteousness, the depth, intenseness, and variety of his sufferings; the honour thus given to the law and justice of God; the sufficiency of his atonement; his subsequent resurrection, triumphant ascension, and glorious exaltation; his power, faithfulness, and love; his gracious invitations and precious promises, with the manifold

blessings which he freely bestows on the vilest of sinners, who come to God by him;—these are all distinct subjects for our meditation, peculiarly suited to interest, instruct, and affect our minds, and to give us entirely new thoughts of God and of ourselves, of sin and holiness, of our immortal souls, our eternal concerns, our past lives, our present conduct and situation, and of all those things which concur to produce deep humility, lively hope, admiring love and gratitude, and every holy affection. Here, without dismay, we may contemplate the divine character with fixed attention, whilst we view it through a medium that softens its splendours, and endears its beauty and glory to our hearts. Here we view infinite justice, holiness, mercy, faithfulness, and wisdom, in perfect harmony, whilst each attribute reflects glory on all the rest. At the same time our interest in these grand concerns, renders them far more affecting to our minds; and we are enabled in revering and admiring the holy majesty of God, and adoring his transcendent excellency, to give up our hearts to the pleasing desire and hope of having him, sinful as we are, to be our Father, Friend, and everlasting Portion. When we have been encouraged to make this choice, and indulge this hope, we begin to fear above all things, lest we should come short of it: we learn to take pleasure in such devout exercises, as strengthen our confidence or give us some anticipation of our desired felicity; we likewise feel lively emotions of gratitude for the condescending and merciful dealings of our glorious Lord with such vile sinners; we long for others also to know and love him, to enjoy his favour, and to

render him praise. Thus we become zealous for his honour, grieved when we offend him, ashamed and humbled at the recollection of past transgressions, watchful against temptation and every occasion of sin, and troubled at hearing others express contempt or enmity against so gracious and merciful a God and Saviour.—All these varied exercises of holy love have respect to the incomprehensible mysteries of the divine nature, displayed in the grand scheme of our salvation; as originating from the most free love of the Father, communicated to us through the atonement of the incarnate Son, and by the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. But it will especially centre, as it were, in the person of Emmanuel, God manifest in the flesh; as the glorious excellency and loveliness of the Deity is there more immediately revealed to us; and as he that loves, honours, believes, and obeys the Son, loves, honours, believes, and obeys the Father that sent him; for "he that hath the Son, "hath the Father also;" and Christ is the appointed medium by which we approach, know, and glorify the invisible God.

The same capacity of perceiving and loving spiritual excellency, which is essential to every exercise of holy love towards our God and Saviour, disposes us also to "delight in his law after the inward man:" to "count all his commandments in all things to be "right; and to hate every false way:" "to choose "the precepts of the Lord;" and to "long to have "our ways directed to keep them." Whilst these, therefore, are our desires and prayers, we must be proportionably grieved and disquieted by "the sin

" that dwelleth in us ;" and the want of more entire conformity to that holy, just, and good law, which we now most cordially approve, will be a constant source of sorrow and cause of humiliation; and at some times will prove the burden or even the terror of our hearts. Thus the believer's tears, groans, and complaints, because " he cannot do the things " that he would," being connected with evident conscientiousness and diligence in performing the will of God, may be considered as a proof that he has the holy law of God written in his heart by regenerating grace.

The same holy judgment and taste of the renewed soul enables him to relish every part of the sacred Scriptures; and, in proportion to the degree of his spirituality, he loves to read and meditate on the word of God: he not only uses it as " the lantern " of his paths," or the ground of his hope; but, he makes it his " delight and his counsellor ;" he esteems it " more than his necessary food ;" and feels an appetite for its salutary instruction, like that of the new-born babe for the milk of the breast.—The same principle causes him to love the house of God, and to " count one day in his courts better than a " thousand." He is no longer glad of an excuse for staying from the public ordinances of God, exact in determining how often he is bound in duty to attend on them, or disposed to yield to every trivial obstacle that renders such attendance inconvenient or difficult; for " he is glad when it is said to him, " let us go unto the house of the Lord ;" he longs for the renewal of that satisfaction which he has there experienced in communion with God and his

saints; and he finds it no easy matter to be resigned to the will of God, when under a necessity to absent himself.—Thus the Lord's day, which was formerly a weariness, unless profaned by worldly business, pleasure, or company, becomes his delight: and, though too often he has reason to lament that his sabbaths are passed without the expected satisfaction and advantage, yet he still meets their return with pleasure, and deems them the happiest days of his life. As he grows in holy love, he is enabled to adopt the Psalmist's words, in respect of the worship he renders to the Lord, and to say, "My soul is "satisfied as with marrow and fatness, whilst I "praise thee with joyful lips:" and every thing that relates to the service of God is endeared to his heart and held in reverence and honour.

In like manner, he perceives the "beauty of the "Lord," in the character and conduct of his people, whom before he neglected, despised, or disliked: and thus he learns to love and respect them as the excellent of the earth. He chooses them for his most valued companions; he sympathizes with their joys and sorrows; he seeks their welfare, and according to his ability endeavours to promote it; he bears with their failings and prejudices, casting the mantle of love over their infirmities; he prays for their prosperity and happiness; and, if he can but see, or think he sees the image of his beloved Lord upon them, he counts them his brethren, though they belong not to his sub-division of the church, subscribe not exactly his creed, and fill up a very different station in the family of God.

The admiring contemplation of the glory of the Lord, in the person and salvation of Christ, is always productive of a gradual transformation of the soul into his holy image*: and the Saviour's condescending and compassionate love to the very persons whose crimes he most deeply abhorred, appears peculiary beautiful and endearing to the redeemed sinner. Thus benevolent love to mankind in general is produced and increased; selfish and contracted prejudices are removed; and proud contempt of the mean, the vile, and the ignorant, bitter resentment borne to the injurious, and envy of rivals and competitors, are changed into pity and good will; while conformity to Christ, love to his most beautiful and glorious character, gratitude for redeeming love, and willing obedience to his commandments, combine their energy, in disposing his true disciples to love strangers and persecutors, the most abandoned transgressors, and the most provoking enemies; and to copy his example of long-suffering, meekness, forgiveness, compassion, fervent prayers and tears for them, and persevering endeavours to overcome evil with good.

When love, the ruling principle of activity in the mind of man, is thus fixed on its proper objects, and regulated, proportioned, and exercised according to the divine law of God; it is evident that all spiritual worship, humble submission and devoted obedience to God, with all righteousness, goodness, and truth, in our conduct towards men, must result from it, and grow in proportion as it is increased. We may, therefore, easily perceive the propriety

* 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18.

of the apostle's prayer for the Philippians, "that "their love might abound yet more and more."—This accords with many other prayers and exhortations in his epistles, "The Lord grant—that Christ "may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being "rooted and grounded *in love*, may know the love "of Christ which passeth knowledge*." "The "Lord make you to abound in love, one towards "another, and towards all men, even as we do to-"wards you; to the end he may establish your "hearts unblameable in holiness." "Ye are taught "of God to love one another; and indeed ye do it: "but we beseech you to increase more and more†." "Your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of "every one of you all towards each other abound-"eth‡!" Indeed the love of believers towards each other is principally meant in these texts: but then we know that this love is the result, the evidence, and the measure of our love to God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ. We are required to consider every true Christian as the brother and representative of our unseen Redeemer; and all the love we bear to them, and the good we do them, for his sake, will be acknowledged and graciously recompensed at the last day, as the indubitable proof of the reality and strength of our love to him.

But let us more particularly consider the words before us.—"That your love may *abound;* may "abound *more;* may abound *yet* more; may abound "*yet more and more!*"—*Press forward*, is the Christian's motto, and the minister's watch-word. "We

* Eph. iii. 16—19.
† 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13. iv. 9, 10.
‡ 2 Thess. i. 3.

" beseech you brethren, that as ye have received of " us how ye ought to walk and to please God; so ye " would abound more and more*." The lively believer is never in this world satisfied with his degree of sanctification; but still hungers and thirsts for more entire conformity to the image and law of God: and the zealous minister never thinks his beloved people arrived at the summit of improvement: but while he says, " I bless God, ye abound in love;" he also adds, " I pray God that you may abound yet " more and more:"—and, " Seeing you have puri- " fied your souls, in obeying the truth, through the " Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren,—see " that ye love one another with a pure heart fer- " vently†."

Comparing these Scriptures with our Lord's declaration, " Every branch in me, that beareth fruit, " my Father purgeth, that it may bring forth more " fruit‡," we may properly advert to a notion very prevalent in some places among professors of the Gospel. It is considered by them as a thing of course for true Christians to *leave their first love;* young converts are supposed to abound most in love; and it is expected that they will decline in that respect, as they advance to maturity in judgment and experience. The expression used in conveying these ideas, is found but once in Scripture. " Ne- " vertheless," says Christ to the Ephesian Church, " I have somewhat against thee; because thou hast " *left thy first love:* remember, therefore, from " whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy " first works; else I will come unto thee quickly, and

* 1 Thess. iv. 1. † 1 Pet. i. 22. ‡ John xv. 1—5.

"I will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent*." The severe rebuke, the earnest exhortation, and the solemn warning of this passage, as connected with the commendation bestowed on the Ephesians in other respects, do not seem calculated to encourage men in reducing the before mentioned opinion to practice. And it should also be observed, that the stony-ground hearers lost their lively affections, and their religion along with them, "because they had no root in themselves."

Surely nothing can be more absurd, than to suppose that a Christian, when *growing in grace*, can decline in that very thing, in which grace principally consists! and love is evidently the greatest of all Christian graces†. Such a sentiment is most pernicious in its tendency and effects: it gives encouragement to hypocrites, who disgrace the Gospel; it assists many in deceiving themselves; and it induces unstable and injudicious believers indolently to yield to lukewarmness as a matter of course, and even an evidence of spiritual proficiency, when they ought to watch and pray against it, and to be greatly alarmed and humbled on the least consciousness of its growing on them, from a conviction of its being one of the most detestable and aggravated proofs of human depravity.—By this stratagem, Satan hath succeeded during a lukewarm age, in establishing a false test and standard of maturity in experience and the life of faith; and hath managed in consequence to render it *true in fact:* that is, *professors of the Gospel do generally thus decline.* Thus the sentiment becomes specious, by an appeal to observa-

* Rev. ii. 4, 5. † 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

tion and experience; and he, who ventures to say, "my brethren, these things ought not so to be," is thought to condemn the generation of God's children.

But what saith Christ to the Laodiceans? "Because thou art luke-warm and neither cold nor hot, "I will spue thee out of my mouth*."—This strange opinion stands, not only unsupported by Scripture, but in direct opposition to it: the question is not how things are?—but how they ought to be. The growing Christian indeed experiences seasons of comparative coldness and negligence, for which he is very deeply humbled: but upon the whole, the vigour of his love is continually increasing, and he manifests this to be the case in his whole conduct. To pray "that our love may abound yet more and "more," or "that we may grow in grace," and make progress in experimental religion, amounts nearly to the same thing; at least there is an inseparable connexion between the two petitions, and they reciprocally imply each other.—We shall, however, in some measure, discover by what means the preceding most detestable sentiment has insinuated itself among pious, humble Christians, whilst we proceed to consider the next clause of the apostle's prayer.

2. Not satisfied with desiring that their "love "might abound yet more and more,"—he subjoined these words, "in knowledge and in judgment: and they suggest to us a second particular, in which growth of grace very greatly consists. There may be

* Rev. iii. 16.

very high affections about religion, without the communication of holy principles; surprize at extraordinary and unexpected events; sanguine hopes of advantages, which appear very great and glorious; sudden transitions from adversity to prosperity, from sorrow to joy, or from pain to pleasure; and every circumstance which excites self-complacency or strong confidence, will involve or occasion a great flow of vehement affections, in the concerns of religion, as well as in those of this life. Thus the Israelites on the banks of the Red Sea, beholding their formidable enemies dead on the shore, and amazed at their own most extraordinary deliverance; "believed the word of the LORD and sang his "praise:" but this apparent good frame, in a vast majority of them, continued no longer than till their inclinations were thwarted; and "they soon forgat "the works of God, and would not abide his coun-"sel." These affections are not of a permanent nature; and, if a man possess nothing better, "he has "no root in himself, and in time of temptation will "fall away."

The new convert indeed experiences and manifests a similar flow of affections. The Lord, in making a Christian, does not destroy the original constitution of the human soul; and the natural passions are useful in the infancy of divine life to produce a proper degree of earnestness and diligence. But with them there exists a spark of heavenly love, which gathers strength whilst they are weakened, and glows more vigourously under their almost expiring ashes.—As this principle acquires energy and ascendency, it suffices to produce activity, and thus

to subordinate and regulate all inferior affections: then every kind of earnestness, which did not spring from knowledge, and was not exercised in judgment and discretion, becomes unnecessary, and may abate without any detriment.

All *holy* affections spring from divine illumination, and increase with the advancement of spiritual knowledge and genuine experience. In proportion as the Christian is enabled to discern more clearly and distinctly the nature and excellency of heavenly things; and as he experiences more fully the pleasure which they are capable of affording; the more will he love and delight in them. The reasons which induce him to love the Lord, and his truths, precepts, and people, are perceived with increasing evidence; his thirst after happiness in the favour of God, his supreme valuation of redemption and salvation in Christ, his gratitude to him and zeal for his glory, with attachment to his cause, and devotedness to his service, appear more and more reasonable, in proportion as his mind is truly enlightened by the influences of the Holy Spirit.—He also better understands, why "he who loves God should "love his brother also;" and why he ought to copy the forbearance, compassion, and mercy of which his redeeming Lord hath given him an example.—As his views enlarge, he learns to pay less regard to the strong emotions of the animal spirits, which produce very pleasing but transient sensations, than to that steady and powerful affection, which influences a man to habitual self-denying obedience; and which connects with disinterested endeavours to "do good "to all men, especially to them who are of the house-

" hold of faith ;" and he accustoms himself to judge of the sincerity and degree of his love, not by certain fluctuations in his feelings ; but by its energy, in prevailing on him to renounce, venture, and endure every thing, in promoting the glory of God and the good of his redeemed people. " For this is the " love of God, that we keep his commandments : and " his commandments are not grievous."—Thus the Christian may actually abound more and more in love as connected with knowledge, when ignorant and selfish passions have subsided : the tumult of his feelings may be greatly abated, when the energy of pure and heavenly love is proportionably increased : and, as impetuous affections and vehement zeal, accompanied with pride and anger, become less and less apparent, he may manifest far more of that love, which " suffers long and is kind, which envieth not, " vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not be- " have itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not " easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in " iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; which beareth " all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, " and endureth all things." In short, that love, which is shown " in deed and in truth," may abound exceedingly, when heavenly wisdom and deep humility have made the Christian ashamed of those ostentatious appearances of love, which consist principally " in word and in tongue," in high professions, noisy disputings, and cheap protestations*."

This will appear more evidently, by considering the other expression employed by the apostle on this

* 1 Cor. xiii. James ii. 15, 16. iii. 13—18. 1 John iii. 16—20.

occasion—" in all *judgment*." The word is taken from the bodily senses, and may in some degree coincide with the spiritual perception before described; but it implies also promtitude and exactness of discernment, as acquired by enlarged knowledge and experience; and it is peculiarly applicable to those persons, " who by reason of use," (or *habit*,) " have " their senses exercised to discern good and evil." We may, therefore, take the word in the common meaning, for the mental perception, when it distinguishes objects, " as the ear tries sounds, and as the " mouth tastes meats;" and this habit of judging accurately and promptly, concerning those matters with which we are conversant, is peculiarly useful, in every part of our conduct.

That zeal which springs from vehement affection, without proportionable knowledge and judgment, generally wastes its vigour about things frivolous, worthless, or injurious; it is tarnished with arrogance, bitterness, and censoriousness; it renders men inattentive to the duties of their stations and relations in life, and regardless of propriety and decorum: it influences them to attempt things impracticable or romantic by rash and unwarrantable means; and it hurries them into such tempers and actions, as needlessly increase the prejudices of mankind against the Gospel and its professors. But when the heart is upright, and a man is favoured with sound instruction and prudent counsel, even his mistakes will abate his confidence and precipitation, and reiterated disappointments will render him more cautious and considerate. In proportion as he grows in grace, he will learn humility, and simplicity of dependence on God,

and discover the duties of his station: he will also become capable of distinguishing between those things, which may be attempted with a reasonable prospect of success, and such as, however desirable, cannot prudently be undertaken: and he will watch and wait for the openings of providence; sensible that it is highly important to confine himself to scriptural and warrantable means, in all his endeavours to bring others over to his sentiments. The rashness, ostentation, and forwardness of his disposition being thus abated, the exercise of his love will be less observable to mankind in general, even when the vigour of it is exceedingly increased, and the effects more beneficial and permanent than before. "The wisdom, "that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable; "gentle and easy to be intreated; full of mercy and "good fruits; without partiality, and without hypocrisy: and the fruit of righteousness is sown in "peace of them that make peace*." The man, therefore, who is directed by this wisdom, will not be so eager to engage in violent disputes about doctrines as formerly: but he will be far more careful to understand and attend to the several duties of his station, submissively to honour his superiors and seniors, and obey those that are placed over him in all things lawful; to win them by the silent preaching of a blameless life, by a meek and quiet spirit, by sincerity and integrity in word and deed, and by a persevering endeavour to render all connected with him easy and happy. His love will vent itself more in fervent prayers for others, which is a secret, but

* James iii. 13—18.

most effectual way of usefulness: he will improve his influence in his circle to some good purposes, and be daily increasing it by consistency and conscientiousness; he will peaceably occupy with his talent, as he hath opportunity; and when more favourable occasions are presented he will gladly embrace them.

It is not sufficient, that we are sure the service in which we are about to engage is a good work; we should also be satisfied that it is the service, to which the Lord hath called us; and this frequently cannot be determined without much knowledge and sound judgment. In a great house there are many servants, and it is not enough that they are all employed about their master's work; for, unless every one knows and performs the duty of his proper place, confusion and disturbance will be inevitable; many things will be left undone, and almost every thing done amiss.—"The Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, "who left his house, and gave authority to his ser-"vants, and *to every man his work:*" and, when every one peaceably, intelligently, and diligently minds his proper business, the affairs of the Church, as well as those of the family, are managed respectably and advantageously. True wisdom, therefore, consists very much in a man's understanding the duties of his station, and performing them in a quiet and exemplary manner: and love abounds to the best purpose, when it is exercised "in knowledge "and in all judgment." The apostle, therefore, ceased not to pray for the Colossians, "that they "might be filled with the *knowledge of the will of* "*God* in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

" that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all " pleasing; being fruitful in every good work, and " increasing in the knowledge of God*." He exhorted the Ephesians to " walk circumspectly, not " as fools but as wise;—and understanding *what the* " *will of the Lord is*†." And he thus counselled the Corinthians, " Be not children in understanding; " howbeit in malice be ye children, but in under- " standing be ye men‡."

It should also be observed, that a defect in judgment while love is very fervent, often produces a disproportionate zeal and earnestness: so that attention to one part of a man's duty swallows up, as it were, all due regard to others. Thus, love to public ordinances, or Christian conversation, frequently misleads professors to neglect their families and necessary worldly business, or to be inattentive to relative duties; and this brings reproach on the word of God. Social religion, also, often interferes with the exercises of the closet, and prevents *growth in grace*, which cannot be expected without much secret self-examination, recollection, meditation, and prayer. In like manner one holy disposition entrenches on another: boldness excludes meekness and prudence, or meekness and prudence degenerate into timidity; and various excesses of this kind render men's profession of the Gospel rather a misshapen monster, than a beautiful well-proportioned figure, as christianity is represented in the Scripture. But the increase of knowledge and judgment, while holy love also acquires permanent energy, leads a man to as-

* Col. i. 9, 10. † Eph. v. 15—17. ‡ 1 Cor. xiv. 20.

sign to every duty its proper place and order; and to cultivate every holy disposition in due proportion and harmony with other graces. Thus redundancies being retrenched, deficiencies supplied, irregularities corrected, natural propensities restrained, and *apparently* opposite graces brought to coalesce; man's religion possesses symmetry and beauty, and he "adorns the doctrine of God our Saviour in all "things*."

The fervent affections of a young convert resemble a fire of thorns, which furiously blazes and crackles, but communicates little heat, and is speedily extinct; while the intelligent and judicious love of a mature Christian may be compared to the steady fire made of substantial fuel, which burns silently, and durably produces far greater effects.—Or, to use another illustration:—Suppose an unconverted person delivered in a most surprising manner, from imminent danger by shipwreck; he would doubtless experience a variety of conflicting passions, and manifest very strong affections; while his joy and amazement would be connected with a kind of natural gratitude to God for his preservation: but this would produce no abiding change in his heart and conduct. Whereas, should this man, after some years be truly converted, he would probably never be able to recover the lively sensations and high affections, which he felt when first escaped from the jaws of death: yet, understanding more distinctly the nature and value of the mercy vouchsafed him, his own extreme unworthiness, the imminent danger to which his immortal soul was exposed, and the as-

* 2 Pet. i. 5—7.

tonishing love of God in rescuing him from it, that he might at length become his salvation; his affections, though less tumultuous, would be more rational, and his gratitude would produce a proportionable effect on his future behaviour.

In fine, lively affections, without knowledge and judgment, betray men into enthusiasm, delusion, absurdity, and inexcusable practices, which injure themselves, mislead others, and disgrace the Gospel: —while knowledge and judgment, when separated from holy love, puff up the professor, and like a stagnating pool become useless or noxious. But the happy union of them in the same character constitutes the highest excellency that can be found on earth; of which the apostle himself seems to have been the most illustrious instance, that hath been found among mere men, from the beginning of the world to the present time. In these things he followed Christ, and prayed for his brethren that they might follow him. Yet he deemed not himself to have already attained; but felt the necessity of "pressing forward, forgetting those things which "were behind, and reaching forth to those things "that were before." And as we, most assuredly, are far beneath him in these invaluable attainments, if we would in a compendious manner know the nature of *growth in grace*, we should study his character and copy his example, according to his exhortation to his beloved Philippians*."

It may be proper in this place to observe, that certain persons, either *designedly* or *incautiously* coun-

* Phil. iii. 12—21.

tenancing antinomian tenets, object to the sentiment, that the law of God is the believer's *rule of conduct*, under the pretence, 'that love renders such 'a rule unnecessary.' But it should be considered that love undirected by any rule, cannot be exercised "in knowledge and in all judgment." Love is the first principle, or main spring of a believer's conduct: but it cannot be also the regulator; for nothing requires so much regulation as the exercise of this affection, in respect of the various objects of it, the proportion due to each, and the manner in which it is to be expressed.—The sails, receiving the impulsive energy of the wind, put the vessel in motion; but they would only hurry it upon some rock or quick-sand to its destruction, or at best drive it far from its intended course, were they not managed according to the rules of navigation, in connexion with the pilot's attention to the helm, and the observations made respecting the progress and situation of the vessel. He, therefore, who rejects the holy commandment, as the rule of his conduct, under the vain pretence that fervent love supersedes all occasion for such a rule, acts as absurdly as mariners would do, should they crowd all the sail that they could, and disdain to attend to the helm, the compass, or nautical observations, because not necessary to hasten the progress of the vessel!—Love is indeed the fulfilling of the law: but it should be remembered, that we are required to love God with *all our understanding*, as well as with all our heart; "and this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."*

* Phil. iii. 12—21.

3. The apostle next prays for his brethren, that "they might approve things that are excellent;" or as it might more literally be rendered *that they might prove things that differ*, and so learn to distinguish between things genuine, and their most specious counterfeits. This, indeed, is but a further advancement of the same principles and affections, in their progress towards perfection: yet it may be considered as another particular of great importance to our growth in grace; and may be viewed according to the two distinct translations which have been given to the text, only reversing the order of them.

We may first make some remarks on the exercise and improvement of the distinguishing faculty, as an essential part of our spiritual advancement to maturity. The inherent excellency of some things above others exists previously to our discernment of it; and we have seen that the capacity of perceiving this excellency, is the peculiar effect of regeneration: but we may here add, that, like the capacities we receive from nature, it may be improved or retarded in its operations: want of information or exercise may keep it obtuse and feeble; suitable instructions and habits may render it more acute, exact, and vigourous.—Now the Lord is pleased to work *by means* in the kingdom of grace, as well as in that of nature: and the children of God require, and profit by, education, in the same manner as our children; nay, spiritual capacities differ in degree like natural abilities, with which they have probably some connexion. As, therefore, a man of inferior talents, cultivated by a good education, will in many respects possess advantages over a man of greater natural powers,

which have been left uncultivated: so experience proves, that something analogous to this takes place among believers. Every regenerate man has a measure of spiritual discernment, but the disproportion, in which some possess it above others, is immensely great.

Next to an upright heart, and a spirit of active love, nothing seems to be of more importance to a consistent, useful, and comfortable life, than this accuracy of the distinguishing faculty, without which even the fervour of spiritual love will often be wasted upon counterfeits, or exercised in uncertainty. "Satan transforms himself into an angel of light; and "his ministers are transformed into ministers of "righteousness." Even pious men differ widely in their sentiments about many parts of religion: they are often very confident in their opinions and eager in defending them: thus controversies are multiplied, and agitated with unchristian vehemence and pertinacity; and we cannot but meet with various specious objections to our views of truth, and manifold difficulties in all we read and hear. Hence we may perceive the importance of cultivating a readiness and accuracy of trying and distinguishing sentiments, pretensions, and practices, according to the maxims and decisions of God's word:—but this cannot be done, without a patient investigation of the sacred oracles, and a persevering endeavour in habituating ourselves, "to compare spiritual things "with spiritual," and to consider things according to their nature and tendency or the relations and proportions which they bear to one another. A constant and simple dependence on the promised teach-

ing of the Holy Spirit is also requisite, in order that we may "henceforth be no more children, tossed "to and fro with every wind of doctrine, by the "sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby "they lie in wait to deceive." And that we may be able to digest without difficulty the "strong meat, "which belongeth to them that are of full age, and "who, by reason of use, have their senses exercis-"ed to discern both good and evil*."

We ought most willingly to receive information from every one, and to be always learners; but our Lord has forbidden us to "call any man master upon "earth."—We should thankfully use the help of others to point out objects to us: but we must at last see them with our own eyes, or not at all. Every constituent of humility and teachableness is comprised in that man's temper, who examines with candid attention such sentiments as have any respectable claim to his notice; who weighs the arguments by which they are supported, comparing them with the standard of Scripture; who earnestly prays for the teaching of the Holy Spirit to assist him in forming his judgment concerning them; and who observes the rules of modesty and meekness in opposing such sentiments as he deems erroneous.—To go further than this, would render us the disciples of men; and, however specious in appearance, it is generally the offspring of indolence and want of seriousness, it betrays a comparative disregard to the importance of divine truth, and it forms a convenient, and alas, in

* Eph. iv. 14. Heb. v. 14.

general, a *creditable*, excuse for shunning the trouble of reflection and patient investigation.

A comprehensive acquaintance with christianity in the dependence, subordination, harmony, and proportion, which every doctrine bears to all the other parts of the system; with an accurate knowledge of the temper and conduct becoming believers in all the relations of life, and the situations in which they are or may be placed, is an attainment of great importance and difficulty: nor can any tolerable proficiency be made in it, without great diligence, and persevering application of mind for a long time; especially as most can only spare a short portion of every day or week from other duties, for such investigations. Yet, without some considerable measure of this acquaintance with the subject, how shall a man be able to distinguish between *truth* and *error artfully disguised?* Between *good* and *evil speciously proposed?* Between solid and plausible arguments and objections? Without a degree of accuracy in spiritual perception, how can the believer separate the precious from the vile, when Satan, by means of false teachers, or by partially misleading pious men, mingles the poison of false doctrine with the wholesome food of divine truth? How shall he draw the water of life pure and wholesome, when immense pains are taken to corrupt the well of salvation? How escape the snares of the enemy, who seldom tempts pious persons to gross crimes, but seduces them by the appearance of good? How avoid the extremes, into which he never fails attempting to drive the friends of truth; or avoid being frighted from those things, which are excellent, by hard names? With-

out this, how can we be enabled to withstand and oppose the prevailing heresies of the times; or maintain our ground against the demands of human authority, or the clamours of a deluded multitude? In short, how can we reasonably hope to steer our course through the shoals, rocks, and whirlpools that abound in this perilous ocean, without suffering great loss, though we should be marvellously preserved from shipwreck? Or how shall we shun one danger without risking another perhaps more formidable?

It is, indeed, evident to every observing person, that the want of this accuracy and promptitude in distinguishing things that differ, exposes many persons to be seduced into various errors both in doctrine and practice, and renders their conduct unstable and their characters inconsistent. Such things may not form an impeachment of a man's sincerity; but they render him very uncomfortable in himself and to his friends; they weaken his influence and prevent his usefulness; they lead him to sanction error by his example, and, as it were, to give bad bills a currency by endorsing or accepting them; and they often bring a reproach on the Gospel itself. On the other hand, the man, who, by patient investigation in dependence on the teaching of the Holy Spirit, has formed an habit, and acquired a facility in "proving all things, and holding fast that which is "good," will proceed with steadiness and consistency through the various circumstances which occur in this changing world; he will be prepared to maintain the credit of his profession, and the tranquility of his mind, in trying times; he will know how to attend with firmness to his own duties, even amidst

persecutions, without incurring the disgrace or distress of "suffering as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body "in other men's matters." He will learn either to suspend his opinion, or decidedly to express his disapprobation when novel sentiments or confident pretensions attract the public notice: for these commonly prove like glaring meteors; they succeed one another at certain intervals, and then fall into contempt and oblivion, though for the time, they too generally meet with encouragement from many professors of religion, to the disgrace of the cause, and the great loss of those who turn aside after them.

The clause under consideration, however, may be considered according to the common translations of it; "that ye may approve things that are excellent." This has, indeed, been in a great measure anticipated, in the observations made on the increase of holy love; yet it may not be improper to subjoin some thoughts in this place, on cordial approbation of *things excellent*, and abhorrence of *things that are evil;* without which the most exact outward regularity of conduct is a mere form of godliness, or a pagan virtue.—"Hate the evil, and love the good," was the Lord's exhortation to Israel: "Abhor that which "is evil, cleave to that which is good," is the apostolical message to Christians*. This the spiritual law requires, and the nature of true repentance implies: without this state of the heart, sin will, in one form or other, maintain its dominion, and shortly reassume its ascendency, notwithstanding terrors of conviction, ecstacies of devotion, or raptures of joy;

* Amos v. 15 Rom. xii. 9.

nor can any man without it be "meet to be partaker "of the inheritance of the saints in light."

However unregenerate persons may amuse themselves with harangues on the beauty of virtue, it is manifest that they do not thus "approve things that "are excellent," according to the scriptural standard of excellency: for if they did, they would not show a decided aversion to the character of those, whom God has in every age honoured as the excellent of the earth; while they not only tolerate, but delight in, and lavish their encomiums, on such persons and actions "as God abhorreth." Yet it is self-evident, that the more a man delights in the good, and hates the evil, the nearer he must approach to the right frame of mind, the greater must be his measure of conformity to God, the better must he be prepared for serving him, and the more completely furnished for every good work.—The abhorrence of evil and the love of holiness must proportionably be attended with self-abasement and humiliation for sin; with simplicity of dependence on the mercy and grace of God in Christ Jesus; with admiring views of his love, and of the preciousness of his salvation; with modesty, meekness, gratitude, patience, and contentment; with watchfulness against the evil that we hate, diligence in pursuing and practising the good which we love, and delight even in a self-denying course of obedience: nor could we ever be proud of any attainments or performances, if we entirely abhorred the mixture of evil, which an acute spiritual discernment will perceive in all we do. It must, therefore, be a most important part of the Christian's growth in grace, to become more and

more able readily to prove things that differ; to distinguish accurately between genuine excellency and all counterfeits; to separate exactly the good from the mixtures of evil blended with it; and cordially to love the good and to abhor the evil, which is found in characters, actions, or tempers, whether ourselves or others are concerned.

4. The next clause in this prayer, "that ye may "be sincere," suggests to us another particular, in which the believer's growth in grace consists.—There may be sincerity without genuine piety; but piety cannot subsist without sincerity. Prejudice, pride, carnal affections, or other corrupt principles may so retain a man in ignorance, or pervert his judgment, that he may "verily think he ought to do "many things contrary to the name of Christ;" and thus very sincerely fight against God. He cannot, indeed, be justly charged with *insincerity;* but that does not excuse his other crimes. He is not a humble, serious, and teachable inquirer after the truth, who seeks it diligently and impartially, as disposed to embrace and adhere to it wherever he finds it, or whatever it may cost him. On the contrary, he shuts his eyes against the light, and strives against his own convictions, when his prejudices, interests, or inclinations are concerned; and "*for this cause* God "sends," such men, "a strong delusion, that they "should believe a lie; that they might all be damn-"ed, who believe not the truth, but have pleasure "in unrighteousness*." But to be sincere, in the scriptural sense, implies the profession of that religion which God hath revealed to us; and must,

* 2 Thess. ii. 9—12.

therefore, differ very widely from sincerity in opposing his truths, precepts, and servants. It consists in *sincerely* reverencing and believing the doctrines of the Gospel, embracing the salvation of Christ, and yielding ourselves to God, as willing to be taught and ruled by him; in *sincerely* seeking to know the truth; in boldly professing it, and endeavouring to live according to it; and in *sincerely* repenting of every sin, renouncing the world, denying ourselves, taking up our cross and following our Lord, in the cheerful obedience of faith and love. When He who searcheth the heart, declares any one to be "a "Christian indeed, in whom there is no guile;" when his "love is without dissimulation," and he is actually as much disposed to every good work, as he desires to be thought; when he can say, without hesitation or ostentation, "Lord thou knowest all "things, thou knowest that I love thee;" when he is as careful to approve his secret conduct to God, as to maintain his credit before men, and dreads hypocrisy more than human censure; when mental discipline, and the government of his thoughts form a part of his daily employment, and 'Cleanse the 'thoughts of my heart by the inspiration of thy Holy 'Spirit,' a part of his secret daily prayer; when he is not conscious of any reserves in his obedience, in favour of some darling passion, or against some self-denying duty: then a man is indeed a sound character, and shall never be put to shame. Let it not, however, be supposed, that a state of perfection is intended: the very man of whom these things may justly be spoken, feels sin dwelling in him, warring against him, and mixing with all he does: he often

goes mourning to the throne of grace, and with sighs and groans laments before God those defects and defilements, which no human eye witnesseth, and which numbers would scarcely consider as at all reprehensible.

But he allows himself in no sin: he desires without exception, to have all evil dispositions mortified; and no more *habitually* permits envy, malice, pride, avarice, or lust, to lodge as a welcome guest in his heart, than he commits gross crimes in his daily conduct.

With such a consciousness of integrity in his Christian profession the apostle was supported, under the various calumnies and suspicions, to which he was subjected. "Our rejoicing," says he, "is this, the "testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and "*godly sincerity*, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the "grace of God, we have had our conversation in the "world*." This *godly sincerity* as much differs from *worldly sincerity*, as *godly sorrow* does from *worldly sorrow*†:" It is in some degree essential to the character of a Christian; but it gathers strength and acquires a more complete ascendency as he grows in grace; and with increasing knowledge, sensibility and discernment, he perceives many things in his conduct and conversation not exactly consistent with it, which he carefully endeavours to rectify: for indeed the same words and actions which once formed no impeachment of his sincerity in professing the Gospel, would prove him a hypocrite, should he persist in them, when "more fully in-"structed in the ways of the Lord."

* 2 Cor. i. 12. † 2 Cor. v. ii. 10

The apostle before this had judged the Philippians to be sincere believers: he was "confident "that the Lord, who had begun a good work in "them, would perform it until the day of Christ;— "even as it was meet, that he should think this of "them all:"—but he prayed that this holy sincerity might be permanently manifested, and more exactly regulate all their professions and conduct towards God and man; that in all their words and actions they might be preserved pure from every tincture of dissimulation and hypocrisy.—And what believer will refuse to adopt this prayer for himself, and for all whose growth in grace he especially desires?—And who does not see, even among professors whom it would be very wrong wholly to condemn, many grievous mixtures of insincerity, real or apparent, the effect of ignorance, warm passions, strong attachments or prejudices, inattention, a timid incapacity of giving a direct refusal, or the habit of exciting expectations by kind language and ambiguous expressions, without any real intention of answering them?

But the original word signifies *unmixed*, or purified from every thing that is debasing, like honey when thoroughly separated from the wax. It has, therefore, been thought, that the apostle referred to the simplicity of the consistent Christian, as contrasted with the conduct of such as attempt to serve God and mammon; and endeavour to unite the interests, pursuits, and pleasures of the world, with those of religion, in defiance of our Lord's most solemn declaration that it is impossible. When a man appears devout in the place of worship, on the

Lord's day, or in pious company, but acts like a worldly man in other circles, and on other occasions; when his religion falls almost wholly under human observation, and neither enters his closet, nor influences his conduct in his family, his dealings, or the use which he makes of his time and talents; when he loves to dispute about the truth, but manifests no improvement of disposition from his attachment to it; when he makes one, almost as regularly at the places of diversion, as at those of public worship; or when he is religious with reserves, and only by fits and starts; he exhibits a melancholy and affecting sight to every truly pious mind. But to this too common character we may contrast the professor of the Gospel, who maintains a consistent conduct in all places and companies, under the habitual impression of this thought, "Thou, God, seest "me;" who "is in the fear of the Lord all the day "long;" who conducts his most ordinary concerns on the highest principles, who aims to fulfil the duties of every relation "heartily, as to the Lord and "not unto men;" who seeks to have all his employments, possessions, and comforts, "sanctified by the "word of God and prayer;" who serves his Master in heaven, when engaged in his shop, in manual labour as a servant, and even in taking needful recreation; and endeavours to observe the apostle's direction, "Whether ye eat, or whether ye drink, "or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Religion constitutes such a man's business, interest, and pleasure; and by assigning to every thing its proper place, proportioning his attention to every

object according to its value and importance, and arranging his secular concerns in due subordination and subserviency to the one thing needful, he renders every part of his conduct an act of cheerful obedience to the God of his salvation. It is probable that no mere man completely answers this description: but it certainly comprises the substance of various scriptural exhortations, and accords to the commands and example of our blessed Lord.—Growth in grace must, therefore, especially consist in a continual approximation to this state of mind and tenour of conduct; and the disparity between our actual attainments and this proficiency in religion, should increase our earnestness in "pressing "forward to the mark, for the prize of our high call-"ing of God in Christ Jesus."

5. The apostle next adds, "that ye may be with-"out offence till the day of Christ;" and we may from this clause deduce another particular, connected with the believer's growth in grace. The day of Christ, when he shall come to judgment, should be continually kept in view by all his disciples; and the Scripture constantly calls our attention to it.—Without any inquiry into the times and seasons, which the Lord hath been pleased to conceal, we may certainly know that "the Judge is at the door;" death will speedily transmit each of us to the tribunal of God; and if we be preserved without offence till death, we shall be also till the day of Christ.

The word translated *offence*, denotes any thing laid in a man's path, over which he may stumble and fall. Numbers "stumble at the word being "disobedient," and openly reject the Gospel; some

make a temporary profession, but by and by "they "are *offended*, and in time of temptation fall away;" and others prove an *offence* to their neighbours, by a conduct inconsistent with their avowed principles. Should we suppose that St. Paul meant to intimate to the Philippians, that they would do well to distrust themselves, though he had expressed a strong confidence respecting them, it might suggest an useful instruction; for the Christian who most grows in grace, will be least disposed to rely on the favourable opinion of his brethren; knowing that they cannot discern the secrets of his heart, conscious of many inward evils that none suspect, and aware that brotherly love induces candour in judging others, and severity only towards ourselves. But the new convert, or declining professor, is apt to take vast encouragement from the good opinion of reputable Christians, or eminent ministers: and it may seriously be apprehended that many rest their confidence entirely on such testimonies, and finally deceive themselves; because they think it needless to regard the warnings of Scripture, or the remonstrances of their own consciences, and refuse to "ex- "amine themselves whether they are in the faith," after having been approved by the disciples and ministers of Christ.

A man may stumble, however, who is not finally cast down. Judas alone, fatally apostatized; but all the apostles were *offended*, when their Lord was delivered into the hands of sinful men. Many have stumbled, and fallen into grievous crimes, causing others to stumble also; and yet they have been renewed unto repentance, and finally saved. What-

ever wise and holy reasons the Lord may have, in his unsearchable counsels, for permitting such things; his law, of "loving our neighbour as ourselves," is our rule of duty: and the believer, who understands and feels the genuine tendency of his principles, would, however assured of his own salvation, be ready to leave the world with groans and tears, on reflecting that his misconduct had emboldened the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, hardened some in impenitency, deceived others in an empty profession, exposed the Gospel to profane ridicule and reproach, and overwhelmed the friends of truth with grief and discouragement.

Our path through life is interspersed with stumbling-blocks, which Satan hath placed there, by means of infidels, hypocrites, apostates, deceivers, and inconsistent professors.—It behooves us, therefore, "to watch and be sober;" yet unless the Lord keep us, we shall watch in vain: so that while we walk circumspectly and cautiously, we should pray without ceasing, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be "safe;" and, while we carefully avoid every occasion of stumbling, we ought to use every precaution not to throw any stumbling-blocks in the way of our brethren. For this must be the consequence, if we imbibe, countenance, or propagate erroneous opinions; if we be drawn into any glaring indiscretion or inconsistency; if we yield to temptation in an unguarded hour; and even, if we do not carefully "avoid every appearance of evil."

Nothing surely can be more desirable to an heir of salvation, than to pass the time of his sojourning in humble fear and circumspection: that he may

bring no reproach on the Gospel while he lives, and leave a testimony to the excellency of his character in the consciences of his survivors. Thus a man finally ratifies every thing he hath said and done to recommend the cause of Christ, during the whole course of his profession: "by well-doing he puts to "silence the ignorance of foolish men:" "being "dead he yet speaketh," and the recollection of his holy conversation perpetuates, and stamps a value on his principles, when he can no longer endeavour to disseminate them.—In proportion to the degree of our genuine love to the Lord and his cause, the desire of thus living and dying must gain strength; and the consistent Christian, in his deliberate judgment, would prefer death with credit, to the most prosperous life connected with becoming a disgrace to the Gospel. This habitual disposition will render him more vigilant and circumspect, and especially more fervent in prayer, that he may be preserved "without offence till the day of Christ." On the contrary, when any who seem to be religious, deem it a mark of proficiency, that they are freed from all concern about these things; when they really grow more lax in their conduct, and regardless what impressions it may make on others; it is evident that they are declining in grace, if not wholly destitute of divine life, whatever opinion they may form of themselves. The primitive churches were troubled with persons of this description, who counted it a proof of their knowledge, and a part of their liberty, to disregard expediency or propriety in using their privileges, and to please themselves, whatever might be the consequence. Thus they became *an offence*

to their weak brethren, not walking charitably towards them. The apostle, therefore, exhorted them to "follow those things which make for peace, "and by which one may edify another:" he declared that if "meat made his brother to *offend*, he would "eat no flesh while the world stood, lest he should "make his brother to offend:" and he added, "Be "ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ." But who can doubt, that Paul was more advanced in grace, than the Christians to whom he wrote? He was far more conformed to the mind that was in Christ, delivered from carnal self-love, inspired with zeal for the glory of God, filled with love to his brethren, and desirous of the salvation of sinners, than they were. Hence we may indisputably conclude, that *growth in grace* consists greatly in an increasing circumspection respecting our conduct, that we may avoid every cause of offence laid in our way, and not prove an occasion of stumbling to others. And as our Lord has declared that "it is bet-"ter for a man, that a mill-stone should be hanged "about his neck, and that he should be drowned in "the depths of the sea, than that he should *offend* "*one of the little ones* who believe in him,"—how greatly ought we to dread such misconduct, as may prejudice numbers against the truth, and prove an occasion of their eternal ruin? It is to be feared, that few of us are wholly guiltless in this respect; and probably we shall find, on accurate self-examination more cause for deep humiliation than we suspect.

But it would exceed the bounds assigned to this treatise, should the subject of *offences* be considered

in a manner suitable to its importance. Yet, before we proceed further, it may be proper to call the reader's attention to that source of *scandals* which our Lord hath especially selected, namely, *discords and contentions among his disciples**. Bitter controversies among professors of the Gospel; mutual accusations, if not invectives and slanders; appeals to the world *in print* of one party against another; and many other effects of pride, selfishness, and resentment, too common at this day, are not only deviations from the rules which our Lord hath prescribed in this case, but, diametrically opposite to them; and constitute offences of the most pernicious and lamentable kind. But growth in grace proportionably destroys the root of this bitterness, and renders men cautious not to disgrace the common cause, by an eagerness to vindicate their own characters, secure their own interests, or expose the crimes of their opponents. It renders them averse to controversy when it can be avoided; and when constrained to contend for the truth, it dictates candour, meekness, modesty, and benevolence; mortifies the desire of victory and applause; and inspires zeal for the honour of God and the salvation of souls. It is, therefore, evident, that this is one important part of growth in grace, though it be seldom duly valued and inculcated.

6. The apostle concludes with these words, "That ye may be filled with the fruits of righteous-"ness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and "glory of God:" and this evidently comprises an-

* Matt. xv. iii.

other particular of great importance in this inquiry. The care, expense, and labour of planting, grafting, pruning, and tending the tree, have respect to the *fruit* expected from it; without which no man would be satisfied with its stately growth, redundant foliage or beautiful blossoms. The whole plan of redemption, the humiliation and sufferings of the divine Saviour, the inspiration of the holy Scriptures, the preaching of the Gospel, and the instituted ordinances, are entirely designed to render men fruitful in good works; and if this end be not answered in those who profess the truth, the whole, *as to them*, has hitherto been ineffectual. "What could I have "done more to my vineyard that I have not done in "it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring "forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

Even the work of the Holy Spirit, in regenerating, illuminating, convincing, and comforting the soul, is entirely subservient to the Lord's design of rendering it holy and fruitful: nor is any knowledge, experience, faith, joy, or confidence genuine, which is not connected with fruitfulness, or productive of it. "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, "is hewn down and cast into the fire."

Whatever part of a believer's conduct tends to make known the glorious perfections and works of God, and to promote the credit of the Gospel, the conversion of sinners, and the peace or purity of the church; whatever may diminish the sum total of ignorance, error, vice, and misery in the world, or increase that of true knowledge, wisdom, holiness, and felicity; in short, whatever does real good to mankind, in their temporal or spiritual concerns, is good

fruit; all else should be counted but as leaves and blossoms. An upright, faithful, blameless, benevolent, peaceful, forgiving, pure, and holy conversation; a cheerful, thankful, resigned, and patient spirit; a reverential and stated attendance on the ordinances of public and family worship; a conscientious regard to the will of God, in our dealings with men, and in our behaviour towards all who are in any way related to us, even when they neglect their reciprocal duties; and an habitual moderation in all the pursuits, interests, and pleasures of life, have a manifest tendency thus to adorn our profession and benefit mankind. To these we may add a faithful improvement of the talents committed to our stewardship; whatever measure of authority, influence, abilities, learning, or riches, may be assigned to us by our common Master: for with such talents we may do proportionable good; provided we be influenced by evangelical principles, avail ourselves of advantages and opportunities, and ask wisdom of God to direct us in our endeavours. All those liberal acts of piety and charity, which Christians perform with that portion of their time, attention, or property, that others waste or abuse, are fruits of righteousness acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. And when we connect with these things, an holy boldness in professing the truth, and constancy, cheerfulness, and meekness, in suffering for it; we have the general outlines of Christian fruitfulness.

The good ground "brought forth fruit, some thir-" ty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold." All believers are in some measure fruitful, when their principles have had time to produce the proper ef-

fect: but the apostle prayed for his beloved people, "that they might be filled with the fruits of right-"eousness." He earnestly desired, that they might produce all the fruits of the Spirit*, in a degree fully adequate to their abilities and opportunities; that none of their talents might be buried or misemployed, nor any thing neglected, or left unattempted, by which they might glorify God and do good to men. We cannot think ourselves perfect *in this life*, without being justly chargeable with pride; nor can we neglect to pray for perfection and follow after it, without criminal negligence, and toleration of sin in our hearts and lives.

Professors of the Gospel too often resemble those trees, which must be very carefully examined, before it can be determined, whether they bear any fruit or no. But the apostle could not be satisfied with such ambiguous characters; he wished to see his people, like such fruit-trees as attract the notice and admiration of every traveller, while at one glance he sees all the branches loaded with the valuable produce.—It must then be manifest that the increase of fruitfulness is one essential branch of the believer's growth in grace; nay, indeed, that all the other particulars are principally important because of their subserviency to this grand object. This might be more copiously proved and illustrated, but it seems too obvious to require it. Our Lord declares, he had "chosen and ordained his apostles, "that they should bring forth fruit, and that their "fruit should remain:" and whoever duly considers the instruction conveyed by the parable of the vine

* Gal. v. 22, 23.

and the branches, will be ready to conclude, that no man is a living branch of that true Vine, who does not bring forth more and more fruit, during his continuance in this world; and will at least determine, that when the reverse takes place, the individual's state and character become proportionably ambiguous.

We have now followed the apostle through the several petitions of this important prayer; intending to reserve the concluding words to be considered in the application of the subject. We shall, therefore, here close this division of the Treatise with the words of the apostle to the same Philippians: "Finally, "brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever "things are honest, whatsoever things are just, "whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are "lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if "there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think "of these things. Those things, which ye have both "learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, "do, and the God of peace shall be with you*."

* Phil. iv. 8, 9.

SECTION II.

Additional observations on the nature and effects of growth in grace, as deducible from other Scriptures.

WHILE we attempt to inculcate those practical subjects, which have been enlarged on in the preceding part of this treatise, some may perhaps fear lest we should draw men from the simplicity of dependence on free grace, by faith in the righteousness and atonement of the divine Saviour. On this account, therefore, as well as for other reasons, it may be expedient to subjoin a few more particulars, in which growth in grace consists, and by which it may be ascertained, both in respect of its reality and degree.

I. Genuine growth in grace is always accompanied with proportionable *humiliation*, and the habitual exercise of repentance. This hath indeed been implied and intimated in every part of our progress: but it is a matter of so great importance, and creates such difficulty to many persons, that a more explicit consideration of it seems necessary. An enlightened understanding, a tender conscience, with a quick sensibility of sin, and abhorrence of it; a submissive will, and fervent spiritual affections, combine in what is here called *grace*, and the *growth of grace*. But clearer and more distinct views of the divine majesty and greatness must proportionably abate our self-importance, and render us little, and, as it were, nothing in our own eyes. Fuller discoveries of the holi-

ness, justice, mercy, and truth of God, and of the glory and beauty of his harmonious perfections, as displayed in the person of Christ, must show us more and more the intrinsic evil of sin, and the heinousness of our own transgressions: and the same defects or defilements must give us proportionably greater uneasiness, than they did when we had less sensibility and spirituality. Thus, self-abhorrence, on account of present sinfulness, must increase with our growth in holiness. The habit also of comparing every part of our temper and conduct with the perfect law of God and the example of Christ, instead of judging ourselves by other rules, tends to bring us more acquainted with the hidden evils of our hearts, and the sins of our lives which once were unnoticed, and even unsuspected; as well as to show the imperfection of our duties. That intimate communion with God, which accompanies growth in grace, must make us more sensible of our sinfulness; and even the company of eminent Christians, tends to abate our self-confidence, to cover us with shame, and to excite us to deep repentance, from the consciousness how far we fall beneath them. Every discovery of the glory of redemption by the cross of Christ, and of the immensity of our obligations to his love, tends to make us dissatisfied with our present measure of obedience, and to humble us under the consciousness of multiplied instances of ingratitude to our Benefactor. So that, while there is any alloy of sin in the heart of a regenerate person, his self-abhorrence and humiliation before God for it, must bear proportion to the degree of his actual proficiency in holiness. No proof *that a sinner is become pure in heart* is so unequivocal, as his

groans and tears on account of his remaining pollution, while it appears less and less in his external conduct: yet this often occasions dejection, when not attended with a clear understanding of that sanctifying work, by which the Holy Spirit seals believers to the day of redemption; and would always produce this effect, were it not for the discoveries made of the entire freeness and inexhaustible riches of divine grace, to all that flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them. Thus, when holy Paul abounded in grace, and was fruitful in good works, probably above any man on earth, he was more humbled before God than others; not only for his former rebellions as "the chief of sinners," but also in respect of his present character and services, he spake of himself as "less than the least of all saints." It is not necessary to expatiate particularly on the well known examples of Job, Isaiah, Daniel, or the Centurion whom our Lord commended; as all who diligently consider the subject, are well acquainted with their actual attainments and unaffected humility.

This increase of humility never fails to produce a proportionable disposition to condescension, courteousness, and modesty; a willingness to take the lowest place, "in honour preferring others to our-"selves;" and a satisfaction of mind in obscure stations, or with ordinary services, if they be allotted to us. The believer gradually acquires such a view of himself and his misconduct during a succession of years, that he "remembers and is confounded, and "never opens his mouth any more for his shame, "when the LORD is pacified to him for all that he

hath done*." This abates the propensity to boast, revile, censure, and complain, which is inseparable from our depraved nature, except by divine grace: and produces lowliness, meekness, candour, resignation, contentment, and gratitude, in the habitual frame of his temper and tenor of his conduct.—If then any person's growth, in other respects, be accompanied with evident pride, ambition, ostentation, contention, arrogance, boasting, and bitterness; we must conclude his apparent graces to be counterfeits, and not the real fruits of the Spirit: for "this "wisdom is not from above, but is earthly, sensual "and devilish." Indeed, unless such proficiency be accompanied with an evident increase in tenderness, modesty, and gentleness; with a readiness to submit to conviction and to be very sorry for every fault, and with a disposition to be more and more resigned under contempt and neglect; a man's growth in grace cannot be clearly ascertained. "Be "ye clothed with humility," is an exhortation to the most arduous attempt and the most exalted attainment, to which man is capable of aspiring. Pride is the most offensive to God of all sins: a proud holiness is, therefore, self-contradictory; for no grace can subsist except by connexion with humility; and the idea, that exhortations to Christian tempers and evangelical fruitfulness tend to render men proud, arrises from an entire misapprehension concerning the very nature of that "holiness, without which no "man shall see the Lord."

The exercise of grace, or diligence in duty, may indeed prove an occasion of pride to a believer;

* Ezek. xvi. 63.

and so may the knowledge of evangelical truth, or even self-abasement and contrition in any remarkable degree. But then true grace continually counteracts these emotions; and the *root* of pride is gradually weakened even by means of these rank but unhallowed *buddings;* as Hezekiah was "humbled "for the pride of his heart." The vigorous exercise, therefore, of *holy* affections must eventually produce deep humiliation: whereas gifts, high and false affections, lifeless emotions, ostentatious services, and an unholy zeal for evangelical truth, not only allow the branches of pride to shoot forth luxuriantly, but water and nourish the root of that hateful propensity.

II. The increase of *faith*, in all its varied exercises, is an essential part of growth in grace. If faith be "belief of the truth," or 'a disposition to 'credit implicitly the testimony of God in his word;' we easily perceive that all true religion begins and increases with it. Unless we thus believe the testimony of God, we can neither fear his wrath, "as re- "vealed from heaven against all ungodliness and "unrighteousness of men," nor regard his warnings, nor understand the nature and value of his salvation:—We can neither accept of his invitations, rely on his promises, give up present objects for better things in reversion, nor render the willing obedience of grateful love. It is impossible, therefore, to be saved without faith; because we shall certainly neglect the great salvation revealed in Scripture, if we do not believe the record of God concerning it, and indeed there is no conceivable way of deriving benefit from revelation, except by believing it.—It

is also manifest, that the more fully we are acquainted with revealed truths, and the more firmly we credit them, without vain reasonings or skeptical hesitations; and the more entirely we realize to our minds the awful and affecting scenes thus presented to our view; the greater degree of every holy affection, the more decided victory over the love of the world and the dread of the cross, the deeper compassion for perishing sinners, and the firmer attachment to the cause and people of God, will be produced. Faith at first works, principally by fear and hope, and afterwards by love: the increase of faith, therefore, must increase the energy of these active principles, and of every affection dependent on them.

On the other hand, growth in grace strengthens faith and habituates the soul to a realizing contemplation of invisible objects, to a deep sense of their importance and of our intimate concern in them, and to a decided preference of eternal things above all the interests of this transient scene.—Thus the believer faints not,—for "he looks not to the things "which are seen, but to the things which are not "seen." He learns with Abraham, to part with objects which nature most endears to him, when the will of God requires them; believing him able to make up every loss: and, with Moses he is enabled to count "the reproach of Christ greater riches than "the treasures" of the world, and "affliction with "the people of God," preferable to the momentary "pleasures of sin,—enduring as one who sees him "that is invisible."

If we consider faith as including the idea of de-

pendence, or committing ourselves to the Lord's hands in credence and confidence; the increase of it is inseparable from growth in grace. The convinced sinner discovers, perhaps, gradually, that he has no resources in himself, and possesses no ability of escaping the wrath to come: but, hearing of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, and of the encouragements and promises of the new covenant, he seeks for the grace of his free salvation. As his views enlarge, he more expressly intrusts his soul and all his eternal interests into the hands of Christ, and expects the supply of all his wants from his unsearchable riches. Thus he learns "to live by the "faith of the Son of God," and, feeling that he deserves only wrath, to expect every blessing through the atonement of his blood, and as the gift of his grace. He has not yet, however, obtained a very deep acquaintance with the evil of sin, the aggravations of his own iniquities, the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart, or his own helpless and exposed condition: so that, attending diligently on the means of grace, he hopes speedily to rise superior to every temptation, and to *feel himself* advancing in holiness every day; and in this he commonly experiences a mortifying disappointment, even when actually growing in grace.

For he continually discovers evil in his heart and duties, which he did not at all suspect, and has painful experience of his own weakness and folly. Many a sharp conflict, and many an evident relapse into evil, tend to convince him that "he can do nothing "of himself;" and he escapes well if he be not so baffled by temptation, as to act inconsistently in

some degree before men, whilst the Lord, "humbles "him, and proves him, and shows him what is in "his heart, to do him good at the latter end*." In this way, however, after a course of years, when he has really grown in grace, and is justly regarded as an established, honourable, and fruitful Christian; he is so far from feeling less need of supplies from the Saviour's fulness, that he depends on him more simply and explicitly for every thing, than he did at the first. He more entirely "counts all but loss, that "he may win Christ and be found in him, and in "his righteousness;" and continually seeks forgiveness of his daily sins and the acceptance of his daily services, by faith in his blood. He now considers the inclination, ability, and opportunity of doing good works, as so many gifts from the God of grace, increasing more and more his obligations; and is deeply conscious, that he hath not duly improved his talents. He is also entirely sensible, that he cannot perform any good work in future, or withstand the temptations which obstruct his progress, without supplies of wisdom and strength day by day, out of that same fulness, from which he has so long been accustomed to receive. Thus his growth in grace is connected with proportionable simplicity in the exercise of faith: and our Lord plainly declares, that the habitual simplicity and energy of faith in him, secures the growth of grace, when he says, "he "that abideth in me, the same bringeth forth much "fruit."

The consistent believer learns likewise to consid-

* Deut. viii. 2.

er every object that surrounds him, in its relation to the providence, the moral government, or the salvation of God; and this induces a constant dependence on him even in the common affairs of life. He "acknowledges God in all his ways:" he relies on him to incline the hearts of those with whom he is concerned to act properly towards him*; to succeed his undertakings, to protect him in danger, to supply his wants, and to comfort and deliver him in trouble. He depends on the perfections and providence of God to fulfil his promises in these respects, as far as conducive to his good; being assured that not a sparrow falls to the ground without his Father's notice and design. He considers the power of God as engaged to restrain the malice and rage of Satan, to moderate his trials, and to preserve him from circumstances of overwhelming temptation; as well as his grace to strengthen holy affections, and give energy for resistance. Thus he passes through one difficulty after another; conscious of his weakness, but relying on the Lord for strength and protection; he casts his care on him, and "in every "thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiv-"ing, makes his requests known to God:" while his experience of the Lord's faithfulness and attention to his prayers tends to increase his faith, to encourage his expectations, and to exclude anxious alarms or distrustful solicitudes. And this prepares him for at length passing through the valley of the shadow of death "without fearing any evil;" trusting that the Lord will then be with him, as his Guide, Guard, and Comforter, and at last receive him to his eternal glory.

* Neh. i. 11.

The increase of faith in this respect must be a most important part of growth in grace, as it produces a calm submissive spirit in the most perilous and distressing seasons; when the hearts of unbelievers, and even of the weak in faith, "are shaken like the "trees by the wind:" it induces an habitual intercourse, in the spirit of adoption between the redeemed sinner and his reconciled God and Father; as he now walks, with God in humble confidence and reverential fear. It likewise secures a man from seeking relief in trouble by indirect means; and renders him watchful against every thing that would interrupt his communion with God, by which his present comfort and hopes of future felicity are principally maintained. And, on the other hand, as he grows in grace he will attain to greater simplicity of dependence on God, which will render him less dependent on men and on second causes; he will be less affected by the fluctuating appearances of external affairs, "his heart "being fixed trusting in the Lord;" and will more uniformly consider all creatures as his instruments of judgment or of mercy, of correction, or of comfort; and remember that "all things work together for good "to them that love God." Thus it appears, that growth in grace, as to the various particulars comprised in the apostle's prayer for the Philippians, will certainly be accompanied with deeper humility, stronger faith, and more entire reliance on God in all things pertaining to this life, and to that which is to come.

It cannot, therefore, be doubtful to any impartial inquirer in what a believer's growth in grace consists. When a man abounds more and more in all

the varied exercises of holy love; when this love is directed and regulated by increasing knowledge, wisdom and judgment; when he acquires by exercise, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the habit of prudently examining and accurately distinguishing between things that differ, abhorring the evil and cleaving to the good, more entirely and heartily from day to day; when he grows more known and approved for sincerity and integrity in all his professions and engagements, and more singly devoted to God, as he advances in years; when he becomes more and more circumspect in his words and works, that he may neither inadvertently fall himself, or cause others to stumble, and more fervent in prayer to be preserved from bringing any reproach on the Gospel to the end of his course: when he grows more abundantly fruitful in the works of righteousness, while at the same time he lies lower before God in deep humility, and is more willing than ever to be abased among men; when he acts more and more habitually with the invisible God and the eternal world before his mind, and relies more entirely on the mercy and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who thus becomes more precious to his soul; and when his dependence on the Providence of God is more uniform, and accompanied with greater composure, submission, and constancy in the path of duty: when this is the case, nothing material to the Christian character seems wanting, the various holy dispositions and affections, resulting from regeneration, are advancing to maturity in just proportion and coincidence, and the believer is evidently ripening for the work, worship, and joy of heaven.

CONCLUSION.

The apostle having prayed that the Philippians "might be filled with the fruits of righteousness," subjoined, according to the uniform language of the New Testament, "which are through Jesus Christ "to the glory and praise of God." Our fruitfulness is utterly insufficient to justify us, or recommend us to the divine favour; and we are not allowed to court the applause of men, in the performance of good works. But "the fruits of the Spirit," produced by his sacred influence from the hearts of fallen creatures, as the happy effects of the incarnation and redemption of Christ, presented through his intercession, and, as it were, sprinkled with his blood; and as conducive in all respects to the glory of God, they must be well pleasing in his sight. We are thus consecrated "an holy priesthood, to offer "spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through "Jesus Christ;" "and hereby he is glorified, "when we bring forth much fruit."—This consideration leads us to inquire more particularly into the reasons which induced the apostle to pray thus for his people; and on what account that growth in grace, which has been described, is so greatly to be desired.

It is observable that no petitions are offered by the apostle in the passage referred to for prosperity, deliverance from persecutors, or even spiritual consolation. In general it is not proper to pray unreservedly for temporal comforts in behalf of ourselves or others; for they are of so ambiguous a nature that we cannot tell whether they would prove blessings or not. John, indeed, wishes his beloved Gaius may "be in health, and prosper, even as his soul prospered!" A singular example! and a petition that must be reversed to suit the case of many professed Christians! No doubt St. Paul prayed that his people might be delivered from "the tribulations and "persecutions which they endured:" and that "their "hearts might be *comforted*, being knit together in "love:" but, when he expressly set himself to point out the things, which he principally requested in their behalf, in order to direct them in seeking the best blessing for themselves, he was silent on these topics. We may, therefore, observe:

1. That growth in grace is necessary in order to the believer's abiding consolation, assurance of hope. It may probably have occurred to the reader, that assurance of an interest in Christ, and of everlasting life through him, has not been expressly mentioned as essential to growth in grace or strength of faith; but as we are exhorted "to give all diligence, "that we may make our calling and election *sure;* "and that we may possess the full *assurance* of hope "unto the end;" we may properly consider genuine confidence as the *effect* of increasing faith and sanctification*. Without a measure of holiness there can

* 2 Pet. i. 10. Heb. vi. 10—12.

be no warranted comfort, or *assurance of hope.* Strong cordials, indeed, given to a man in a high fever, may produce a transient exhilaration, while they increase the disease: but proper medicines tend to restore health, which will be accompanied with more pleasing sensations, and of a more permanent nature. Now sin is the distemper of the soul; and while pride, malice, lust, covetousness, or any other vile passion prevails in the heart, no salutary comfort can be derived from the promises or privileges of the Gospel; except as they allure a man from his present seducing and destructive pursuits, by showing him that far greater blessings are attainable. But when a humble, meek, pure, and heavenly disposition is produced; when knowledge, love, submission, and spirituality diffuse their benign influence; subjugating every corrupt passion, and moderating every attachment to earthly objects, —the believer consequently feels peace and comfort: while the joys, which on some occasions fill and transport the soul in an extraordinary manner, are chiefly reserved for times of sharp conflict, heavy trials, or hard services.

All our genuine consolations spring from the influences of the Holy Spirit, opening to us the treasures of redeeming love, applying to our consciences the blood of sprinkling, exciting holy affections in our hearts, and giving us earnests of heavenly felicity. They are, therefore, inseparably connected with the exercises of repentance, faith, love, hope, and gratitude, and indeed greatly consist in them: while every kind or degree of sin, even in our tempers or desires, grieves and quenches the spirit of God, and

interrupts our comforts; till renewed humiliation, and application for mercy, through the blood of Christ, restore our peace. It must, therefore, be evident, that growth in grace powerfully tends to establish peace, hope, and joy in God; a "peace of God "which passeth understanding," a "joy unspeakable and glorious." We ought to value these consolations above all the riches and pleasures of the world, and desire the abundant enjoyment of them from day to day: but we should not expect, or allow ourselves to wish for it, except through the medium of increasing sanctification and fruitfulness. Upon the most mature deliberation, the prudent Christian will not hesitate to pray, that the loss of wonted consolations may chastise his folly if he grow lukewarm, careless, or worldly: and that, if the only wise God see that withholding present comfort will promote his growth in grace, he may be sanctified and not comforted, rather than comforted and not sanctified. Present joys are of short continuance, but increasing holiness is the recovery of health, and the preparation for future and eternal felicity. Our Lord hath commanded us to "seek *first* the kingdom of "God and his righteousness;" and then "all other "things will be added to us:" but numbers by inverting this order come short of salvation, and soon lose their idolized worldly objects. In like manner many professors of the Gospel are so eager to obtain assurance, that they seek it in the *first* place, instead of first seeking to grow in grace and to bring forth the fruits of righteousness, leaving it to the Lord to give them comfort, and to cause them to "abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost."

in his appointed time and way: and thus many are buoyed up in vain confidence, or amused with delusive joys; and others continue feeble, sickly, and dejected, during the greatest part of their lives. Various methods have, indeed, been devised to afford them relief and consolation; but they have merely a transient effect: for the child that does not grow is not healthy, and being unhealthy will be uncomfortable, whatever may be done to cheer its spirits by cordials, to feast it with delicacies, or to amuse it by toys and finery.

2. Growth in grace is most desirable, in order that the Lord Jesus may be glorified in us, and by us.—When Christ appeared on earth, all those who saw the men whom he had restored to the use of their senses and limbs, recovered to health, or raised from the dead, would have reason to exclaim with astonishment, 'See what Jesus of Nazareth hath 'done! how wonderful is his power! how great his 'love! how many, how stupendous, how beneficent 'his miracles!'—While the monuments of his divine compassion and authority over all nature would be ready to say to all around them, 'He whom the 'rulers and scribes despise and seek to destroy, re-'stored my limbs, my understanding, or my life.'—Thus would he be honoured by them, and in them.

When they, who profess the doctrines of the Gospel, and avouch Christ to be their God and Saviour, make it incontestably evident, that their tempers are sanctified, their lusts mortified, their selfish hearts enlarged, and their characters sound, pure, and holy: all who knew them before, will be constrained to notice the change, to wonder at the effects, and

to inquire into the cause.—What hath transformed 'the brier into a myrtle, the lion into a lamb, or the 'swine into a sheep?" and the persons who have experienced this change, by professing their faith in Christ, give him all the glory. Thus the nature and tendency of the Gospel, and the excellency of its fruits, are manifested: the Lord, as it were, challenges men to come and examine the work which he hath wrought, and to say, whether it be not worthy of admiration and honour? This is the best method of confuting infidelity, and constraining iniquity to stop her mouth; and "the fruits of right-"eousness" which believers produce, prove, through "Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God," as they tend to make known his glorious perfections, and promote the cause of his holy religion among mankind.

But "woe be to the world because of offences;" and "woe be to him by whom the offence cometh." The crimes of professed Christians render our holy religion odious and contemptible to millions in all the quarters of the globe, and give infidels their most plausible arguments against it. The crimes of hypocrites, who contend for the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, prejudice the minds of multitudes in every part of this land: and, alas! the misconduct of true believers, who do not feel sufficiently the necessity of growing in grace, produces, in a measure, the same lamentable effects. We ought, therefore, to pray more for ourselves and each other, that the Lord who hath set us apart for himself, would make us to be "unto him for a name, and a praise;" "that our conversation may be such as becometh

" the Gospel of Christ :" that we may walk worthy of God, who " hath called us to his kingdom and " glory ;" and that we may put those to shame and silence, " who would speak against us as evil-doers."

The apostle instructs Titus to exhort servants " to be obedient to their own masters, and to please " them well in all things, not answering again, not " purloining, but showing all good fidelity ; that they " may *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all* " *things* :*" and the same argument is equally cogent in respect of every instance of good behaviour, in those who profess the Gospel. Nothing indeed can add to the beauty and glory of divine truth, as it is in its own nature : but this can be discerned by the spiritual mind alone ; to the world in general it appears foolish and absurd, and the misconduct of such as profess evangelical truth, confirms despisers in their proud contempt of it. There is, however, an excellency in a truly christian temper and conversation, which they are not hardy enough to deny, and of which they frequently have the fullest demonstration, in the advantage or comfort which they derive from it.

One talkative, imprudent, and inconsistent zealot for the doctrines of the Gospel, who neither knows nor practises the duties of his station, but is habitually guilty of manifest crimes or glaring improprieties, will expose the truth to the contempt of a whole family, a village, or even a neighbourhood. But a single Christian matured in grace according to the sketch here given, notwithstanding incidental

* Tit. ii. 9.

failures and manifold infirmities of which he is humbly conscious, will obtain a testimony in the consciences of all his connexions, and win upon their hearts; he will soften the prejudices, silence the reproaches, and live down the contempt of the circle in which he moves; and evangelical truth will acquire such a respectability in a neighbourhood, where consistent Christians are numerous, as none can properly conceive who have not actually witnessed it.

3. This must be allowed to have a powerful tendency to make known the salvation of Christ. All that love the Gospel desire to spread it: but many attempt it in a very improper manner, thinking that they ought to dispute for the truth with every body to whom they have access, or that at all events they must become preachers of the word. No doubt it is very commendable to contend earnestly for the truth; and what zealous Christian does not pray, that the Lord would increase an hundred fold the faithful ministers of the Gospel, how many soever they be?—But perhaps the cause of truth would be no loser, if we had much less disputing, and even rather less preaching *of some kinds:* provided we had more of those who preach to all around them in the silent energy of an holy life; after the manner, in which Peter exhorts wives to preach to their unbelieving husbands*. Every word that persons of this character drop, whether of serious reproof and exhortation, or in ordinary discourse, and every persuasion to read a book, or hear a sermon,

* 1 Pet. iii 1—7.

would have great weight, and in some instances success: whilst, "Physician heal thyself," is a sufficient answer to the most zealous unholy disputer.—Nay, it may reasonably be supposed, that a faithful minister of very slender talents, who lives consistently with the holy doctrine which he delivers, and is attended by a few persons whose conduct do credit to the Gospel, will in the event be more solidly and durably useful, than the most popular speaker, who is either lax in his own conduct, or surrounded by admirers who are a reproach to his doctrine.

It pleases God on some occasions, to revive religion by numerous apparent conversions, and in a very rapid manner: yet this will soon die away, and continue at most only for a single generation, if holiness do not shine in the lives of those concerned. But more commonly the cause of God diffuses its influence like the leaven, and like the grain of mustard seed, almost insensibly from small beginnings to a great increase. When the work is genuine, and the profession accords to the specimens given in the New-Testament, the holy flame kindles from heart to heart, in families and neighbourhoods: and one after another is won over, even without the word, by the conversation of friends and relatives, while they behold and benefit by their consistent conduct. This we should desire and pray for in our several circles; and would we adopt the right method of succeeding in it we must "let our light "shine before men, that they may see our good "works, and glorify our heavenly Father."

4. It is also most desirable, that the knowledge

of the Gospel should be continued to our posterity. Holy men of God have always paid a great regard to the religious interests of succeeding generations; and with this view redoubled their diligent and zealous endeavours, when they were about to leave the world.—Thus Moses, Joshua, David, Paul, and Peter, had the same "mind in them, which was also "in Christ Jesus." The true believer longs especially, that his children and children's children, with those of his relatives and friends, may from generation to generation be the supports and ornaments of the Gospel. In condescending regard to such desires, the Lord hath mentioned these blessings in the covenant he makes with us, assuring us that it is intended "for our good and for that of our "children after us:" yet none, but such Christians as have been described, can reasonably expect to be thus favoured. Their example and instructions, their testimony for God and his truth, living and dying; and the reputation which they often acquire after death, however slighted before, plead powerfully in behalf of religion, in the consciences of those whom they leave behind. As they have honoured God, he will thus honour them, by answering their prayers and prospering their endeavours; and if they leave any of their children or beloved relatives in an unconverted state; they may even at their departure possess a peaceful hope, that the Lord will yet think upon them for good, and at length gather them into his fold, perhaps by means of their dying exhortations. In general, however, it is certain, that christianity of this kind is not easily or speedily eradicated: the fruit produced by

such believers, as have here been imperfectly described, will remain in its effects from generation to generation; and indeed, in one respect or another, to the end of the world and to all eternity. "All "the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him," saith the Lord concerning Abraham; "for I know "him that he will command his children and his "household after him, and they shall keep the way "of the Lord to do justice and judgment; *that the* "*Lord may bring upon Abraham, that which he hath* "*spoken of him**."

5. Growth in grace is peculiarly desirable, in order that we may possess an assured hope and strong consolation at the approach of death. This last enemy is indeed the king of terrors, in his original nature and consequences; and though he is disarmed of his sting, when he approaches as a friend to release the believer from his uneasy situation in this evil world, and convey him to his Father's house, yet our nature is apt to recoil; and when faith and hope waver, we cannot but look forward to the solemn season with trembling anxiety. Indeed, were we sure of having one day of spiritual light and comfort, and no more, during our continuance on earth, it would be very desirable to reserve that cordial for this last season of conflict. But a lax and slothful conduct, even if gross sins are avoided, prepares distress for the closing scene; and the Christian who habitually yields to indolence, or, in other words, does not grow in grace, makes, as it were, an assignation with terror to meet him on his death bed: while, on the other hand, evangelical principles, a

* Gen. xviii. 18, 19.

" conversation becoming our profession," and diligence in our proper work and in the great business of religion, constitute an habitual and actual preparation for that solemn scene. Our loins are thus girded, our lamps burning, and we are like men who are waiting for the coming of the Lord. We may not indeed beforehand be able wholly to discard our apprehensions; nor ought we to perplex ourselves on that account: but we are indisputably safe; and at whatever time, or manner we may be summoned hence, that day will not overtake us as a thief, with terrible surprise, or fatal consequences, but we shall be graciously addressed in these most condescending words, " Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

It would be wholly superfluous to speak particularly concerning the day of judgment in this inquiry; but we may very properly close it with the apostle's words to the Philippians: " Be blameless and " harmless, as the sons of God, without rebuke, in " the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, " among whom *shine ye* as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in " the day of Christ that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain*."

If the things we have considered, be indeed the principles of the Gospel reduced to practice, and accord to their genuine tendency, what an excellent religion is christianity! how base must they be, who

* Phil. ii. 15, 16.

oppose, insult, and reproach it, for the faults of many of its professors! and how inexcusable are those persons who give them such an occasion!—It is indeed a most palpable falsehood to pretend that the doctrines of grace diminish our obligations to obedience, or supersede the necessity of good works: but the holy lives of those who embrace them is the best, and in fact, the only effectual confutation of this slander. If then the advantages and consequences of growth in grace be so important, and the nature of it so evident, little need be said concerning the way in which we ought to seek so great and desirable a blessing. The motives and encouragements of the Gospel are abundantly sufficient, to animate those who duly attend to them; we have free access to the throne of grace; exceedingly great and precious promises to plead with our merciful God and Father, and an inexhaustible fulness from which to draw all things "pertaining to life "and godliness." We are directed and commanded to "ask and receive, that our joy may be full:" God hath appointed various means, which he hath engaged to render effectual to all those who diligently attend on them in humble faith; and every person may soon learn for himself, if he duly watch and keep his own heart, what employments or companions prove helps or hindrances to his soul, in this grand concern. Could we, therefore, succeed in convincing men that it is possible even in this world, to arrive at degrees of spirituality, fruitfulness, and stability, far beyond what is commonly attained; that it is their bounden duty to "press "forward—forgetting the things which are behind,

" and reaching forward to the things which are be-
" fore ;" that they have great cause for deep humi-
liation, on account of their unfruitfulness in times
past, and yet ought not to be discouraged from ex-
pecting more effectual help in their future endea
vours : if, I say, men could be thus induced, hearti-
ly to set themselves to seek and pray for more abun-
dant growth in grace, as the most important and de-
sirable of all blessings, there can be no doubt, but
they would make greater progress than they gene-
rally do. Yet Christians would not on that account
become better satisfied with themselves or their at-
tainments. Perhaps, through self-acquaintance,
tenderness of conscience, and deep humility, they
might not be sensible of making any advances in
grace : and assuredly they would more and more
hunger and thirst after righteousness, till they come
to the fountain above, when they shall drink, and
thirst no more for ever. But to such persons, the
words of the apostle are peculiarly suitable and en-
couraging. " Therefore, my beloved brethren, be
" ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the
" work of the Lord : forasmuch as ye know that
" your labour is not in vain in the Lord*."—" Now
" the God of peace, that brought again from the
" dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the
" sheep, through the blood of the everlasting cove-
" nant, make us perfect in every good work to do
" his will, working in us that which is well pleasing
" in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be
" glory, for ever and ever.—Amen."

* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

A

VINDICATION

OF THE

DIVINE INSPIRATION

OF

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES,

AND THE DOCTRINES CONTAINED IN THEM,

IN ANSWER TO

MR. PAINE'S AGE OF REASON.

"Be ready always to give an answer to every man, that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."
1 PETER iii. 15.

"For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God." 1 SAM. xvii. 26.

Preface to the Second Edition.

A CONSIDERABLE change seems to have taken place in the minds of numbers, respecting *The Age of Reason*, and its celebrated author since the first publication of this answer; yet it may be feared that infidelity and skepticism are not proportionably decreased. Perhaps the enemies of revelation have even established themselves on more tenable ground; and, by conceding that the books of the Old and New Testament are *authentic records*, they derive some advantage in denying that they are *divinely inspired:* but if this point be maintained, the rest is of comparatively small moment; for we still want an *authoritative standard of faith and practice.* It was on this ground, therefore, that the author ventured to meet the Goliath of modern infidelity: and as he has sufficient evidence that his answer has not been wholly unsuccessful, he was not willing it should be out of print in Britain, as it has been printed and circulated on the other side of the Atlantic.

It seemed, however, unnecessary to take up the reader's time, in exposing the ignorance, errors, or misrepresentations of Mr. P., or in answering such *sophisms*, as he alone would have advanced. Some passages, therefore, are retrenched, in order to render the answers to plausible objections more nervous, by bringing them nearer together, and in some instances enlarging on them.

The author has also bestowed considerable pains, in making the whole more instructive and convincing to the serious inquirer. He hopes, therefore, that the work is rendered more suitable to the case of those, who, without having read *The Age of Reason*, are yet perplexed with difficulties concerning the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, and wish to have their objections fairly considered, their arguments answered and their doubts removed.

In respect of Mr. P.'s work, it may be proper to observe, that it by no means accords to its title. *The Age of Reason*, is far more replete with wit and rhetoric, than with sober discussion and solid argument. It is in fact an attempt to reduce to practice Lord

Shaftsbury's famous maxim, that *ridicule is the test of truth;* except that scurrility and acrimony frequently predominate. It is easy to answer Mr. P.'s *reasoning;* but his *confident assertions, vehement declamations, and smart repartees, are very imposing.* Every reader should, therefore, pause from time to time; and when he has been carried away by the Author's popular eloquence and wit; he should seriously ask himself, What *argument* does all this contain?

Hitherto the human race has, in one way or other, been generally destitute of true religion; and that author must be very sanguine, who expects to produce a sudden revolution. There is, however, no fear 'lest the Bible should fall,' as Mr. P. seems to predict; for it has stood many far more formidable assaults, and will survive every opponent: but doubtless numbers will fall and perish, by means of the publications of infidels: and, on the other hand, a few individuals may be preserved or recovered by every effort to counteract them; and this may suffice to stimulate our exertions.

When Mr. P. thought himself near death, he rejoiced that he had published the first part of *The Age of Reason.* This indeed proved *the sincerity of his enmity to the Bible:* but should a Christian adduce a circumstance of this kind as a *proof that his principles were true,* he would, not without reason, be *counted an enthusiast.*

Though *priests* be not allowed to pay the same regard to their credit, interest, or even subsistence, which all other men do without censure; yet, so long as they believe the Bible to be the word of God, they are bound in conscience to defend it; and why should they not be as much authorised, and as competent, to write on religion, and in defence of it, as other men are concerning their several professions?

Mr. P. professes to draw all his arguments against the Scriptures from the Scriptures themselves; yet his quotations from ancient and modern enemies to christianity prove, that he would gladly have employed other weapons, had he known where to have found any that suited his purpose. But men of *greater learning and application* than he, are here at a loss: for the more the subject is calmly and solidly investigated, the fuller will be the proof, that "ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD; and is profitable for "doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished "unto all good works."

VINDICATION, &c.

BOOK I.

CHAP. I.

THE BOOKS OF MOSES.

MR. PAINE undertakes to *demonstrate*, that Moses did not write those books which are ascribed to him; and consequently that they are destitute of authority. They would not, however, be destitute of authority, though it were known that Moses did not write them: for they may be authentic records, even if penned by another author. Yet I am far from conceding this point: and having answered other objections, I shall give my reasons for believing, both that Moses wrote these books, and that he wrote them *under the immediate superintending inspiration of the Holy Spirit.*

The arguments by which Mr. P. endeavours to overturn the authority of these ancient records, are of two sorts: some more directly tend to show that Moses could not be the author of them; and others

to prove them unworthy of God, and thus to fix a charge of imposture on the writer, for delivering his doctrines and commands in the name of the Lord.—I shall begin with the former.

I. It is alledged, that Moses could not be the author; because the writer generally speaks *in the third person.* But what weight is there in this argument? Xenophon and Cæsar, admired writers among the Greeks and Romans, do the same when recording *their own actions:* and no scholar ever questioned the authenticity of their works on that account.—In Deuteronomy, however, Moses speaks principally *in the first person;* and Mr. P. finds great confusion in the arrangement of that book, and says it is *dramatical**. Whereas it is obvious, that the historian *records facts in the third person,* and *delivers exhortations in the first:* and the changes of persons are only pauses of the speaker, giving an account of the occasion on which each speech was delivered, and of some coincident circumstances. Mr. P. must, therefore, have strange ideas of the *drama:* if he applies that term to a single speaker addressing the same audience, at different times, almost in the manner of a modern preacher!

No accurate student of the Bible needs to be informed that the city of *Laish* did not receive the name of *Dan,* till long after the death of Moses†. Yet it would be difficult to prove that no such place as Dan existed in the days of Abraham, in whose history that name occurs‡: *Dan* signifies *judgment:*

* P. ii. p. 7, 8. † Judg. xviii. 29
‡ P. ii. p. 10—12, Gen. xiv. 14.

and perhaps a city in those parts might be so called, because some person was stationed there to administer justice. Admitting, however, that Laish was meant; must we thence infer that Moses did not write the book of Genesis? Some transcriber, in after times knowing that *Laish* was then commonly called *Dan*, might insert this name, as a note in a parenthesis, to render the history more intelligible: and this note might afterwards be continued instead of the text; either by mistake, or with the same intent for which it was inserted. Arguments must be very scarce with infidels; when this single word is brought forward with great parade and confidence, as if it contained a full demonstration, that the books of Moses were anonymous impostures!

It may perhaps be proper to inform some readers, that the *Bible*, and the *Bible-chronology* are entirely distinct: we contend that the former is the infallible word of God; we allow the latter to be the fallible calculations of learned men*.

No doubt some parts of the thirty-sixth chapter of Genesis were inserted long after the death of Moses†. The compiler of the books of Chronicles abridged several genealogies from Genesis; and he continued the list of names far beyond the times of Moses, in the latter part of the first chapter. In consequence, probably, some transcriber put these additions, to the genealogies in the thirty-sixth of Genesis, where they have stood to this day. Studious men have always been aware of the difficulty, and

* P. ii. p. 10. † P. ii. p. 12.—14.

have attempted to obviate it: and the *Age of Reason* has not shown that any new solution is wanted.

The assiduity of infidels may perhaps, hereafter, discover a few more instances of the same kind: but instead of wondering, that such trivial variations have taken place in these ancient records; we may be astonished, they have been so well preserved, that the most acute critics can discover no alteration of any importance to our faith and practice.

As king Zedekiah is spoken of in the second book of Chronicles, Mr. P. (taking it for granted that these books were written before the book of Genesis because the verses above mentioned were taken from the first book,) concludes that Genesis was not extant till after the captivity; and that *the first book* in the Bible was written three hundred years after Homer's Iliad*. He must mean the *first book in order*, not the most *ancient book:* for he allows David and Solomon to have written some part of the works ascribed to them.

But will any man seriously contend, on such slight grounds, that the books of Moses were penned after the captivity: when the whole religious system and civil policy of the Jews, for nearly one thousand years before, had been rested on those books; and all their other writers perpetually referred to them; as it is manifest from all the histories, Psalms, and prophecies of the Old Testament?

In fact, the line of David is in these books brought down four generations lower than the time of Zerubbabel†: and if this too were written before the

* P. i. p. 32, 33. † 1 Chron. iii.

books of Moses; the Jews had not a written law till within about four hundred years before Christ! But at that time, the whole nation, by some unaccountable infatuation, was led to receive the works of an anonymous impostor as sacred books, which they and their fathers had always possessed, read, and obeyed, for above one thousand years; or at least, allow that they had always suffered severe punishment, whenever they disregarded or disobeyed them!

Mr. P. does not seem to have made up his mind, as to the period, when he should allow the Jews to have been in actual possession of the books of Moses*. Such an explicit declaration would indeed subvert his cause: for it would be far easier to meet a direct charge, than vague and varying insinuations on the subject.

Moses lived till the Israelites had got possession of the countries, which had been governed by Sihon and Og, and he died on the borders of Canaan. Surely then he might write, that "the children of "Israel did eat manna till they came to a land in-"habited;—they did eat manna till they came to the "borders of Canaan†."

The historian remarks, that "the man Moses was "meek above all men which were upon the face of "the earth." 'Therefore,' says Mr. P. 'Moses 'could not be the writer; for to boast of meekness 'is the reverse of humility, and a lie in sentiment.' —But *meekness* in this connexion is opposed to an *irascible disposition;* and the meekness of Moses is

* P. ii. p. 32, 33. † Numb. xii.

mentioned as an aggravation of the offence committed by Aaron and Miriam, and as a reason of the Lord's interposition to plead his cause against them*. To speak truth of ourselves is not always vain-glorious boasting; nay, there are occasions, on which a man may mention his own meekness and gentleness in consistency with the deepest humility. Our Lord himself said "I am meek and lowly in heart:" and, though infidels, who seem to think themselves exclusively warranted to proclaim their own virtues, may despise this remark; yet Christians will reverence the example, and not wonder that Moses, having impartially recorded his own faults, should be led by the Holy Spirit to mention this excellency of his character.—Some indeed think, that a *blameable lenity* was intended, and others seem to admit that the words were inserted by another hand: but I see not the least occasion to have recourse to such suppositions; for the readiness with which Moses forgave the offenders, and the earnestness with which he prayed for Miriam, illustrate the account given of his unassuming and gentle disposition.

Mr. P. seems to think it self-evident, that all accounts of giants must be fabulous; and consequently *that the Bible is a fable*†. But men are now sometimes seen considerably above eight feet high, and proportionably large; authentic histories mention those of a still greater size: and a well-attested relation, of men ten or twelve feet high, would not be incredible; for none of our reasoning can show this to be impossible.—A bedstead fifteen or sixteen

* Exod. xvi. 35. † P. ii. p. 17.

feet long, must have been needlessly long, and the disproportion must be ascribed to the ostentation of the King of Bashan*.—Even if Rabbah were never taken till the days of David, which cannot be proved: yet Moses might know, that the Ammonites had seized upon the bedstead of Og, or bought it of the Israelites, and reserved it as a curiosity in their capital city. But suppose the passage in question were added as a note many years afterwards; how does this invalidate the authenticity of the books of Moses?

The fourth commandment, as it stands in the fifth of Deuteronomy, varies from the original law written in the twentieth of Exodus: hence it is inferred that the writer of these books received his materials from tradition, or invented them himself†. But impostors do not admit such *apparent* inconsistencies, which may at all times be avoided with very little trouble: so that they are rather proofs of the writer's conscious integrity. In fact, Moses, when delivering a most impressive and pathetic exhortation, did not confine himself to the words which he had recorded as an historian. The people very well knew the original ground for hallowing the sabbath, in honour of the Creator: and he thought himself at liberty, to remind them of their obligations to JEHOVAH their Redeemer from Egyptian bondage, and of the humanity due to their bond-servants; for this constituted another important reason for hallowing the sabbath. *Distinct* motives are not necessarily *inconsistent*. Mr. P. in writing his

* Deut. iii 11. † P. ii. p. 9.

several pamphlets, might both aim to free mankind from *vulgar prejudices*, and to obtain celebrity for himself; and he might deem it proper on some occasions to insist on the one motive, and in different circumstances to bring forward the other, without being justly chargeable with inconsistency or self-contradiction.

Mr. P. cannot suppose any Christian believes that Moses wrote the account of his own death and burial; and if he thinks, that none have attempted to account for the circumstance of these events being recorded in the last chapter of Deuteronomy, his information must be very defective! Almost any of those expositors, against whom he declaims, though he certainly never consulted them, would have shown him that he has made no new discoveries, and that the difficulty is far from insuperable.—Perhaps Joshua or Eleazar added this chapter, or it was taken from the authentic records of the nation at a later period; when the words, "no man "knoweth his sepulchre to this day," were evidently subjoined.—The preceding history plainly implies, that Moses should *die* *; and the concluding chapter records the accomplishment of these intimations. "Moses died—according to the word of "the Lord, and he buried him." Mr. P. cannot find the antecedent to *he* in this passage†!!!—If it be asked, how it was known that the Lord buried Moses? I answer, by immediate revelation; and a good reason may be assigned, why he should thus

* Numb. xxvii. 13. Deut. iv. 21, 22. xxxi. 14. 16. 27. xxxii. 50.

† Deut. xxxiv. 5, 6.

be buried: namely, lest the Israelites should idolize his relicks, as they did the brazen serpent, or as papists do the bones of the saints.

II. We now proceed to consider objections of another nature, and far more important; as being intended to prove the books of Moses in all respects unworthy of God.—Mr. P.* finds great fault with the history of the creation. 'It begins abrupt-'ly; it is no body that speaks; it is nobody that 'hears; it is addressed to nobody; it has neither 'first, nor second, nor third person.' Does this passage contain either *reason* or common sense? The sacred writer first addresses the reader, and then he introduces the Creator speaking to the chaos, which promptly obeys his omnipotent commands. And in what does this differ from the manner of other historians except in simplicity and sublimity? For even *infidels* of taste will doubtless coincide with the *pagan* Longinus, in admiring the history of the creation as inimitably beautiful, after all Mr. P.'s endeavours to ridicule it: and we need but compare it with the whimsical absurdities of the other *world-makers* whom he mentions, to learn the difference between man's vain imaginations and the sure testimony of God.

Mr. P. attempts to *burlesque* the history of the fall, in subserviency to his grand design†. Let the serious reader, however, determine whether the sacred writers borrowed their doctrine concerning the devil and his angels from pagan mythology; or whether these fables were distorted traditions concern-

* P. i. p. 15. † P. i. p. 10, 11, 46. P. ii. 14.

ing the fall of angels, decorated by the ingenuity of the poets.—The notion of Satan *warring* against the Almighty, who defeated him, is grounded on a passage in the Revelation of John*; which may *refer* to the fall of angels, and the opposition of fallen angels to the kingdom of Christ; but which directly *predicts* other events.—No doubt this book was written long after the fables of Jupiter and the giants, of Jupiter's casting Vulcan out of heaven, and of Pluto's reigning in Tartarus, were invented; but the doctrine of *fallen angels* was published in the Old Testament, many centuries before the date of those fables, and in all probability was known by tradition from the beginning.

The doctrine of Scripture on this subject must here be stated.—God created multitudes of angels, and endued them with noble powers and faculties: but as they were moral and accountable agents, some of them revolted from their Creator, incurred his displeasure, lost the divine image of holiness, became malignant and desperate, and, as determined enemies, employed all their abilities in attempting to counteract his plans and to ruin his other creatures. Though "cast down to hell, and bound in "chains of darkness to the judgment of the great "day," so that it is impossible for them to escape eternal condemnation; yet they are permitted under certain limitations, for a season, to show their power and malice; as wicked men practice and prosper for a time.—Being united in one kingdom, under Satan or the Devil, every thing they do is

* Rev. xii. 7, 8.

frequently attributed to their leader; as generals are said to do those things, which they perform by the troops under their command: so that *omnipotence* or *omnipresence* is no more ascribed personally to the devil, than to Alexander or Cæsar. It is, therefore, a direct slander to affirm that 'Christian divines give 'him a power equally great, or even greater, than 'they ascribe to the Almighty.' The sacred writers never represent Satan as 'defeating the power and 'wisdom of God:' but as *permitted* to try and prevail against our first parents, to tempt their posterity, and to maintain his influence over wicked men, his *willing* servants; and even this will be over-ruled to the brighter display of the Lord's glory, the greater advantage of all his friends, and the deeper confusion of Satan and his adherents.

The Lord created the parents of our race in his *own image:* but though perfectly holy, they were not unchangeable; for immutability is an incommunicable divine perfection. As a test of their obedience, they were forbidden to eat of the fruit of one tree, and warned that in the day they ate of it they should surely die. The tempter, however, concealing himself in the serpent, which is represented to have been a most beautiful and sagacious animal before this transaction, prevailed by his insinuations on Eve, and by her on Adam, presumptuously to violate this single easy restriction. Immediately they both became mortal, and their future lives resembled a lingering execution. Their *spiritual life*, or *the holy image of God*, and capacity for happiness in his service and favour, was also extinct: and they became prone to sin, like the tempter to whom

they had listened. And as they were created with immortal souls; the guilt they had contracted, with the crimes which they would be continually adding, must have ensured their final misery, had not mercy been vouchsafed through the promised Seed of the woman.

Nothing is easier than ridicule, to a man of a lively imagination, who is not restrained by any regard to piety or decorum. This transaction may be called, 'a *tete-a-tete* between the serpent and the 'woman:' 'the woman *in her longing* eating an ap-'ple:' 'the snake persuading her to eat an apple: 'and the eating of that apple damning all mankind.' But what is there in all this, except profaneness? Might not the Creator require some test of obedience and gratitude from his favoured creature, and some condition of further blessings? Could any thing be more easy, than this single instance of self-denial among a profusion of delights? And was not wilful and presumptuous disobedience, from unbelief, hard thoughts of God, sensual concupiscence, and ambition of independence, a most flagrant act of rebellion and ingratitude? For who can deny, that the easier the command, the more atrocious the violation of it? They, who vindicate or palliate such conduct, must have a very feeble sense of their obligations to God, whatever they argue about moral obligations among men.

But do all mankind deserve damnation for Adam's sin? Instead of answering such a bold interrogation, I would only say, "Nay, but O man, who art thou "that repliest against God?" It is undeniable, that pain, sorrow, and death exist, and that men are

prone to wickedness in every age and country. The greatest philosophers can give no satisfactory account, how the world was brought into its present deplorable condition; and the scriptural narration is at least as reasonable as any hitherto devised. Now if Adam by transgression became sinful and mortal, his whole posterity must fall *in* and *with* him; for every creature propagates its own nature and all its essential properties. Accordingly children are liable to pain, sickness, and death; and the state of the world accords exactly to the sentence denounced on Adam*. Children likewise show precisely the same propensities to pride, envy, sensuality, and other corrupt passions, as appear more strongly marked in grown persons. If then all men actually sin and deserve punishment, if they be incapable of a holy felicity in the enjoyment of God, and if there be a future state of righteous retribution: they must be condemned *in consequence* of Adam's sin, unless mercy and grace deliver them. Would it not then better become us to leave these matters to a world of clearer light, and to employ ourselves in seeking mercy and victory over our evil propensities, or in alleviating the miseries of mankind; than in disputing about what we do not understand, and ridiculing what we cannot disprove? Could it even be *demonstrated*, that the Mosaic account of the fall were false; the wickedness and misery of our race would not be in the least diminished, and unrepented sin would surely expose men to the wrath of God. As to *infants* who die without actually trans-

* Gen. iii. 16—19.

gressing the divine law; we are not bound to determine any thing about them, but may safely leave them in the hands of infinite justice and mercy.

The circumstance of Eve's not expressing wonder at the serpent's speaking, may be accounted for by the brevity of the narrative, and the extraordinary sagacity before observed in that animal; and by supposing with great probability, that Satan ascribed this gift bestowed on the serpent, to the salutary tendency of the forbidden fruit.

Mr. P. can clearly see the doctrine of *evil spirits* in the Scriptures: and so far he is right. But as Satan's kingdom is the power of darkness, and as he is most successful when least suspected: it is not impossible but Mr. P. may be indebted for many of his brilliant thoughts to Satan's suggestions, especially 'such as 'bolt into the mind of their own accord*;' and that he may abundantly repay his obligations, even while he denies Satan's existence, by endeavouring to set men against the religion of Him, who "was manifest-"ed to destroy the works of the devil."

'Take away from Genesis,' says Mr. P. 'the be-'lief that Moses was the author, on which only the 'strange belief that it is the word of God hath stood; 'and nothing remains but an anonymous book of 'stories—absurdities, or—downright lies. The story 'of Eve and the serpent, and of Noah and his ark, 'drop to a level with the Arabian tales, without the 'merit of being entertaining; and the account of 'men living to eight or nine hundred years becomes 'as fabulous as the immortality of the giants.'—But

* P. i. p. 43.

is it not more wonderful, that God should at all destroy the work of his own hands, than that he should preserve his creatures for many hundred years?—Many traditions among the heathen confirm the account of the deluge, and learned men have discerned traces of it all over the earth.—The opinion of the divine inspiration of the book of Genesis is not supported, *only* or *principally*, by the opinion that Moses wrote it, but rests on other evidence.—This despised book contains the most satisfactory account of the creation, the entrance of sin, the origin of the nations dispersed through the earth, and the history of the remote ages, at this day extant in the world: with many most extraordinary prophecies, fulfilling at this day. And the story of Joseph, in the opinion of most competent judges, is the most pathetic and interesting that ever was related!

Mr. P. has given a fair specimen of his *candour* and *caution*, in his observations on the conduct of Moses and the Israelites, respecting the Midianitish women and children. The Lord prohibited the Israelites to assault or distress the Moabites and Ammonites, with whom the Midianites were intimately connected*: yet Balak, king of Moab, when they approached his land, instead of sending an ambassador to desire peace, or openly making war upon them, sent for Balaam to curse them. When that project did not answer, he followed Balaam's counsel, and, by means of the Midianitish women, seduced the Israelites into fornication and then into idolatry, in order that they might provoke the Lord

* Deut. ii. 9—13.

to curse them. In this diabolical design he so far succeeded, that twenty-four thousand of them were cut off by divine judgments in one day. Moses was, therefore, commanded to avenge Israel on the Midianites, who seem to have been most criminal: and twelve thousand Israelites were sent into the country of Moab and Midian, who were completely successful and did not so much as lose a single man. Mr. P. calls this a *plundering excursion*, though, even if Moses had acted by his own authority, the war would have been completely justifiable.

But after the return of the detachment with the spoil and prisoners, Moses ordered all the grown women to be put to death; and this excites most dreadful exclamations. The *sword of war* indeed should distinguish between armed opponents and those who make no resistance: but the *sword of justice* knows no such distinction. Deliberate insidious temptation to sin must appear, to all wise and virtuous men, the greatest of injuries. The sex of the culprit does not in other cases excuse guilt or exempt from punishment: and if the women, in defiance of modesty and decency, openly suffered themselves to be hired by the princes and priests of Baal, to become prostitutes to the Israelites, in order to promote idolatry, and to bring guilt and wrath upon the worshippers of JEHOVAH; was it meet that the tempters should escape with impunity, while the tempted were severely punished? The project of thus seducing Israel was reasonably adjudged the national sin of Midian and Moab: and was it proper the principal criminals should escape? Moses could not possibly know the individual transgressors; and the

Lord commonly involves many in public calamities who are not equally criminal: by his orders, therefore, the virgins were mercifully spared, and the rest were righteously punished.

But Mr. P. says that an order was given to *debauch the daughters*, as well as to slay the mothers; and he calculates that thirty-two thousand were thus consigned to debauchery!—If he could *prove* this, he would have an argument against the divine authority of the books of Moses, far more cogent than any he has hitherto produced: for a holy God may justly condemn transgressors to death, but he cannot command them to violate his own righteous laws.—But where did Mr. P. learn, that the Israelites were even *allowed* to debauch their female slaves? In fact the law of Moses did not permit a man to *marry* a captive without many delays and previous formalities: and if, afterwards he divorced her, he was bound to set her at liberty, "because he had humbled her*." And it is most certain that the passage referred to, compared with other Scriptures, implies nothing about *debauching* the female children, or even taking them as concubines; but merely of retaining them as slaves, educating them in their families, employing them in domestic services; and either incorporating them by marriage as proselytes with the Israelites or marrying them to their servants.

It cannot, however, be denied, that the male children, as well as the grown women, were consigned to the slaughter: and was not this very dreadful? Certainly; and wicked too, if Moses did it of his own mind. and to gratify his own passions. But this coin-

* Deut. xxi. 10—14.

cides with another subject, which I shall here, once for all, fully consider: namely, the orders given and executed respecting the extirpation of the Canaanites and Amalekites.

Every one acquainted with logic must perceive, that all who make these orders an objection to the divine original of the Old Testament, argue completely in a circle, and beg the question. They *assume it as self-evident*, that the Lord could never command Moses or Joshua to destroy these nations: they next execrate them for doing such things without authority: and thence they infer that God never spake to mankind by such wicked persons. But should they not first of all *prove*, that the judge of the world could not *justly* give these orders? Till this be done, all their inferences from a false or disputed principle must be false or disputable; and all their declamations, mere rhetorical arts of imposing on the understanding by appealing to the passions.

A judge may condemn a criminal to die, and an executioner may take away his life, without murder, or even injustice: yet if an unauthorized person should put him to death, he would be a murderer.—Man is surely accountable to his Maker; wickedness merits punishment: and the supreme Judge may inflict *deserved* punishment in what manner he sees good. According to the Scripture, death is the execution of a righteous judgment denounced against men, as transgressors of the divine law: and a more rational account of our maladies and miseries, and of the triumph of death over the whole human species, has not yet been given. If then sinners die, because God inflicts death as a part of their merited punishment; the

justice is precisely the same, whether the sword or disease fulfil the divine mandate. The Canaanites were sinners against the Lord exceedingly, and had filled up the measure of their crimes; who then will say, that He might not *justly* have destroyed them by pestilence, deluges, and earthquakes? Who will contend that it would have been wicked in an angel to have executed the Creator's commission in cutting them off, as the army of Sennacherib was slain? And why might not the Lord select a nation, and, having sealed their commission by public miracles, require them to extirpate an abominable race of men from the face of the earth?

The same objection might be made, with equal validity, though not so plausibly, against all the ways, by which God inflicts death upon mankind. We must, therefore, either deny that God inflicts diseases and death, and by a species of practical atheism resolve every thing into chance or necessity; or blaspheme God as cruel and unjust; or else allow that he may execute criminals in what way he sees good. The divine commission to Moses and Joshua must indeed be proved by other arguments: but these considerations completely invalidate *the objection*, and demonstrate that God might *justly* give them such orders. If it be urged that famines, earthquakes, and pestilences, though equally destructive, do not so much contradict men's notions of God; it may be answered, that "the world by wisdom knew not God;" and pagan deities, as characterized by Greek and Roman authors, prove men's notions in this respect too fallible and absurd, to be in the least depended on.

'But wherein could crying or smiling infants offend? To read without horror of their slaughter must undo every thing tender, sympathizing, or benevolent in our nature: and the sacrifice I must make to believe the Bible, would be sufficient *to determine my choice.*'—*Unbelief is*, then, *the effect of choice*, not of unavoidable error or ignorance. But who can read of the ravages made by a conflagration, the miseries of famine and pestilence, or the desolations of an earthquake without horror? Yet who disbelieves a well attested narrative of such events on that account? Or who, but an atheist, denies the justice of God in them?—The *execution of criminals* is calculated to excite horror, and not to gratify the finer feelings of benevolence: yet no declamation will convince a sober man that they are in all cases unnecessary, or that all concerned in them are sanguinary monsters. The aversion men feel to the scriptural history in this respect, above all other records of misery and bloodshed, arises from its opposition to the self-flattery of the human heart: for these awful executions militate against their palliating notions concerning the evil of sin, and the demerit of despising and rebelling against God.

No doubt every humane heart revolts from the idea of slaughtering infants: yet infants die by thousands all over the world, with unspeakably more anguish, than a speedy undreaded death by the sword would occasion: and has not God the issues of life and death? Many a man who inherits an impaired estate, or a gouty constitution, sensibly feels, that children suffer in consequence of the crimes committed by their parents. Thus parents are punished in their

children: and if the Lord sees good to prepare the souls of dying infants for heaven, and to receive them to himself; though the smiling or crying babes were supposed to have been as spotless as angels, they will not charge God with injustice or cruelty on account of their premature death, let who will on earth presume to arraign his conduct. Set aside the doctrine of original sin, allow pain and death to be the appointment of God, and deny the future happiness of infants dying without actual transgression; and I could declaim against the ordinary conduct of providence in this respect, with as much vehemence, and at least as much plausibility, as Mr. P. does against the Bible; had I no more reverence for the *works* than he has for the *word* of God.

But if some great and important ends were answered, by the peculiar method in which the Lord punished the nations of Canaan: then the objection is not only removed; but the divine wisdom is illustrated, and a presumptive argument afforded that these books are a revelation from God.—Who can deny that the world has been full of atrocious crimes in every age? Or who will say, that it does not become the Ruler of the universe to take effectual methods for the restraint of man's wickedness? If then the Canaanites were addicted to abominable idolatries and detestable lusts; if their altars reeked with human sacrifices, and their religious worship was connected with the most shameless impurities: it must have been peculiarly worthy of God, to inflict vengeance on them in a way as extraordinary as their crimes had been, and suited to produce durable and extensive effects on the surrounding nations. His powerful hand and aw-

ful justice, and the difference between Him and the idols of the heathen, would be rendered far more conspicuous in punishing them by the sword of his worshippers, than if he had desolated the land by earthquakes and inundations: for these are commonly ascribed to natural causes, and God is forgotten even in the midst of them. Thus the affecting solemnities of a *public execution* are generally deemed more conducive to the ends of good government, than the *concealed punishment* of a criminal. But especially these transactions were calculated to warn the Israelites themselves, against the abominations which they were commissioned to punish: and if they did not fully answer that purpose, we must impute it to the strength of human depravity. The whole history throws immense light on the plan of divine government: it shows the malignity of sin, and proves that it will be punished far more severely than we naturally imagine: it teaches all, who reverence the Bible, to fear the wrath of God and seek his mercy; and the beneficial effects of these temporary miseries, on all succeeding ages and nations, exceed all calculation; while the whole number that perished, bears no more proportion to the vast multitudes who have profited by their doom, than the few criminals who suffer under the mildest governments, do to the nation, that is thus preserved in peace and good order.

"The earth is the LORD's and the fulness of it." Surely, then, he had a right to bestow that proportion of it on his worshippers, which the Canaanites had forfeited by their crimes! The Israelites did not come by stealth to take possession of it: but had

long before avowed their purpose, and the grant of it which they had received from JEHOVAH.

Those of the inhabitants who submitted, were treated with clemency: and from these examples we may infer, that others might have been spared, if they had not hardened their hearts in impenitent defiance of God. Had the infants alone been preserved, they must either have been retained in the most rigorous bondage, or lived to perpetuate the bloody contest. The women were in general as criminal as the men: and if there were exceptions, the righteous Judge would discriminate properly in another world; though national judgments, however executed, make not these exact distinctions.

If Israel, by these severities, contracted a ferocious spirit, which they gratified on other occasions; they proportionably disregarded the law given them, which required love to neighbours, strangers, and enemies; and, the case of the devoted Canaanites excepted, prescribed rules of war, at least as equitable and mild as those of any heathen nation*. And it should be noted, that the just notions of modern times, and even those of infidels, respecting clemency towards enemies, originated, not with the admired Greeks and Romans, but with Christians, who learned them from the Scriptures: so that when Christian princes were known in the world, more humane sentiments on these subjects soon began to be adopted.

The credit given to the Bible is often ascribed to the prejudices of education. But though an obscure individual, I feel impelled to declare, that I once was

* Numb. xx. 14.—21. Deut. xx. 10—14.

not much more disposed to believe the Scriptures than Mr. P.: and having got rid of the shackles of education, was much flattered by my emancipation and superior discernment. Yet nearly thirty years employed in diligently investigating the evidences and contents of the Bible, have produced in me an unshaken assurance that it is the word of God.

The most remote shadow of a proof cannot be produced, that Moses carried on war under pretence of religion. He made no proselytes by the sword: and neither he, nor any other person mentioned with approbation in Scripture, made war on any neighbouring nation because they were idolaters. If any man pretend to draw the conduct of Moses, in the case of Midian, or of Joshua in that of the Canaanites, into precedent; let him work such miracles and produce such credentials as they did; till that be done, Mr. P. has my free consent to pour forth against him that torrent of indignant reproach, which he hath unjustly bestowed on some of the most excellent characters that ever appeared in the world.

Mr. P. most virulently reprobates the law, which condemns the stubborn and rebellious son to be stoned*: yet that law contained much wisdom and mercy under its apparent severity. The parents were the only prosecutors; and as both of them must concur, natural affection would effectually prevent the frequent execution of the penalty denounced: and indeed we do not read a single instance of the kind in the whole subsequent history. If, however, such an extraordinary event at any time occurred, it could not

* Deut. xxi. 18—21.

fail to excite general attention, and to produce immense effects on the minds both of parents and children: so that the solemn execution of one incorrigible criminal would be a salutary warning to tens of thousands. The very existence of such a law would increase the authority of parents, and give energy to their admonitions; as well as fortify the minds of young persons against the enticements of bad company, and other temptations. Thus it would powerfully tend to *prevent wickedness;* the great end proposed by every wise legislator!

It would likewise be a perpetual monitor to parents not improperly to indulge their children; to establish their authority by salutary correction in their tender years; to watch over them, and give them good instructions; to check the first buddings of vice, to set them a good example, and to pray for them without ceasing. These must have been the effects of this law, on all who duly attend to it; and we may learn similar lessons from the *spirit* of the statute, though it be now obsolete: for the Law-giver is unchangeable.

The prosecution was not allowed merely for *stubbornness*, but for *obstinate persevering rebellion against parental authority, contempt of correction, gluttony, and drunkenness;* crimes destructive to families and communities. These offences must be so fully proved, as to induce the elders to condemn and execute the criminal: and their authority would secure every innocent person against the hasty rage, or the deliberate malice, of those few parents, who were capable of such desperate wickedness as the murder of their own children.—This law, therefore, so harmless and beneficial in its operations, yet so contrary to human poli-

cy, rather proves than invalidates the divine original of the book in which it is contained: though it do not at all coincide with *modern notions*, which, rushing from one extreme to another, directly tend to dissolve all obligations to submission, either to human or divine authority.

Whether priests are fond of preaching from Deuteronomy or not, we know that our Lord answered all Satan's suggestions by quotations from it; and the tempter may, therefore, be supposed to have a peculiar dislike to this book. The heart-searching God alone can *know* whether the *desire of tithes*, or *the love of souls*, excites the minister's diligence; but, after all Mr. P.'s ridicule of "the ox treading out the grain;" such ministers, as answer the emblem of that most laborious, tractable, and useful animal, will certainly deserve, and need not to fear but they will receive a suitable provision, while the Lord has work for them; whatever may become of tithes and establishments.

And now, what do all these objections against the books of Moses amount to, when stripped of the wit, ridicule, and declamation, with which they are exhibited? The writer generally speaks of himself in the third person: a very few instances occur, in which a trifling alteration has been made in the text, during a course of above three thousand years: an account of the death and burial of the author is subjoined: events are recorded, which seem to us improbable, because contrary to our general observation: actions were done, by the *command of God* which *without that command* would have been unjust: and laws are given, which do not coincide with modern notions

concerning government and parental authority.—These *frivolous objections* are called *demonstrations;* and the author supplies his want of argument, by declaiming against Moses, and against impostors and priests, with peculiar vehemence and acrimony!

It now remains to state briefly the grounds on which we maintain the divine superintending inspiration of Moses; as well as that he was the writer of the books that bear his name, excepting the very few passages which have been mentioned.—The books in question give plain intimations to that effect. "Moses wrote all the words of the Lord:—and he "took the book of the covenant, and read in the "audience of the people*." "And it came to pass, "that when Moses had made an end of writing the "words of this law in a book, *until they were finished*, "—He commanded the Levites, saying, take this "book of the law, and put it in the sides of the ark, "that it may be a witness against thee†."—Reference to the law *written* by Moses, is continually made in the subsequent books of Scripture. The testimony of all antiquity, Jews and pagans, with that of the whole Christian church, and their avowed enemies the modern Jews, concur in ascribing these books to Moses; and even this testimony, from time immemorial, requires something more forcible to invalidate it, than a few stale objections which have been repeatedly answered.—How could such an unanimous opinion have prevailed in the world, if there had been no foundation for it! If it did not originate with the publication of these books, at

* Exod. xxiv. 4—7. † Deut. xxxi. 24—26.

what time could it have been introduced? Is it possible that the whole nation of Israel should have been persuaded by an anonymous impostor, that they had for ages past been governed by laws, and conversant in histories, which they had never before seen? If the rulers and a large majority, from selfish motives, had attempted such a barefaced imposition, would not some opponents have risen up, and two parties been formed?—However the minority had for a time been run down at home, would not other ages have heard of it? And if some received these books as genuine, would not others have rejected them as spurious? Indeed it is too late for a man to attempt disproving any books having been written by the person whose name they have certainly borne for above two thousand years, with almost the unanimous consent of all mankind.

The history contained in these books is confirmed by the most ancient records of the pagan world, and even by the fables of the poets, and has every mark of authenticity. The view given in them of the perfection, works, and government of God, is in all respects most rational and sublime: and as much excels all that pagans have written on those subjects, as the sun outshines a taper. The *moral* law, the sum of which is, "love God with all thy heart;" and love "thy neighbour as thyself," is perfectly "holy, just, "and good;" but no Gentile ever gave such a delineation of man's duty. The *judicial* laws will be found wise, equitable, and beneficial, in proportion as they are considered attentively, and are well understood. The *ceremonial* institutions were not only ordinances of divine worship, and barriers against idol-

atry, but evident types and shadows of good things to come; and as such, a kind of prophecy, the exact accomplishment of which is a full proof of their divine original.

The miracles wrought by Moses were of such a nature that they could not be counterfeited: millions, both of friends and enemies, were appealed to as eye-witnesses: and if they had not been actually performed by the person who wrote the books in which they are recorded, when and how could it have been possible to persuade the whole nation of Israel, that they and their forefathers had always believed them? And if they were wrought by Moses, they prove both the authenticity and divine inspiration of his writings; for he continually declares that he spake, wrote, and acted by divine authority.

The prophecies contained in these books, which have been exactly fulfilled, evince the same truth. Regardless of ridicule, I still venture to maintain, that the first promise of the seed of the woman, is a most astonishing prediction; not only of the crucifixion and triumphs of Christ, but of the persecutions, supports, and victories of the church, in every age of the world. The prophecy of Noah, concerning the descendants of Canaan, has received a most wonderful accomplishment in the history of mankind to this present day. The blessings pronounced by Jacob on his sons were evident predictions, verified by the event; especially that of the sceptre not departing from Judah till Shiloh came. Balaam's predictions have been wonderfully fulfilled, especially in the dominion of the Macedonians and Romans over the countries once possessed by the Assyrians and Hebrews. And

the state of the Jews to this day is prophetically described in two remarkable passages*.

Finally, the testimony of our Lord and his apostles, who always refer to these books, as written by Moses, and as the *scriptures*, the *oracles of God*, the *law of God*, fully confirms them both as genuine, and as divinely inspired; with all those who duly reverence the testimony of Christ. So that every evidence, that proves the truth of Christianity, confirms also the divine authority of the Old Testament in general, and of the books of Moses in particular.

And now, what are all Mr. P.'s boasted *demonstrations*, that these books are spurious; compared with this body of evidence, thus compendiously stated, that they are genuine and divine? If *his* cause had not more to recommend it to the hearts of ungodly men, than to the understandings of sober, diligent inquirers; no believer need trouble himself to answer him: but all those (alas, how numerous are they?) who are not willing to part with their sins, and lead a godly life, wish to disbelieve the Scriptures, either wholly or in part; and I do not think, that any man ever thoroughly desired to part with all his sins, and to get rid of the Bible at the same time.

* Lev. xxvi. Deut. xxviii.

CHAP. II.

The Historical Books of the Old Testament.

JOSHUA.

In prefacing this book some years since, I observed, that "It is not certain who was the penman:—'but it is probable that the substance of it was written by Joshua, though several passages appear to 'have been added after his decease; perhaps by 'Phinehas, or some other person, who was employed in connecting the *memorials* that he left behind 'him*.' The *book of Jasher* contained or constituted a part of these memorials: for it seems to have been a collection of records and poems, made at the time when the events happened.

No doubt part of the book of Joshua was written after his death, and that of the elders who outlived him: and if Samuel, or some later prophet, compiled the whole of it in its present form from the records of Israel, how does this deduct from its authenticity, or invalidate its divine authority?—It is certainly

* Family Bible

very ancient; and the person who compiled it, testifies that Joshua wrote some part of it in the book of the law of God, and also attests that the *written law* was extant in his days*. The book of Jasher was appealed to for the truth of the facts recorded in it; which sufficiently proves that such memorials existed and were well known, when it was published.—The Jews have in every age considered it as an authentic part of their Scriptures, and preserved it with most scrupulous care. Joshua is repeatedly mentioned with approbation in the New Testament: and the book is quoted in a manner which both authenticates the history, and honours it as the word of God†: and thus it is proved to be authentic and divine, by all the evidence which establishes the New Testament.

Horace, a man of great genius and good sense, published an ode, in which he gloried that his fame would be celebrated to the end of the world: and Mr. P. repeatedly speaks of his own fame as celebrated on both sides of the Atlantic: yet the book of Joshua must be rejected as spurious, because the writer, speaking of Joshua, says, that "his fame was noised "through all that country!" The only reason of this conclusion seems to be, that Joshua referred all the glory to the LORD God of Israel.

Joshua, as commander of Israel, meditated an attack on Jericho; when one in human form, with a drawn sword in his hand, accosted him, declaring himself to be Captain of the LORD's host. Joshua could not but know who this was; for he knew whom he served as the leader of the armies of Israel: he

* Josh. xxiii. 6. xxiv. 26. † Josh. i. 5. Heb. xiii. 5.

therefore fell on his face and worshipped him, as one who waited to receive his orders. He was then directed, according to the customs of those times, "to "loose his shoe from off his foot," as Moses had done when JEHOVAH appeared to him in the bush; and he obeyed.—'And what then?' says Mr. P. 'Nothing; 'here ends the story and the chapter too*.'—Here ends the *chapter*, it is true, and the division of the chapters is here peculiary injudicious; but who does not know that the division of the Bible into chapters and verses is comparatively a modern arrangement? The *story*, however, proceeds. And the reader is first informed of the situation of Jericho: then the Captain of the Lord's host, now called JEHOVAH, promises to deliver Jericho into Joshua's hands, and gives him directions in what manner to conduct the assault: and Joshua, following those directions, is completely successful†. The appearance of JEHOVAH *in human form* is not peculiar to this place‡: and Mr. P. is not mistaken, in condemning as idolatry, the honour on this occasion paid to him who appeared as man, if he were not also God. I shall, however, leave the Socinians to answer this on their principles; for such passages create no difficulties to those, who believe the doctrines of the Trinity, and of Christ's eternal Deity.

It might have been expected that this Champion of infidelity would ridicule the miracle of the sun standing still at the command of Joshua: but wit and humour are not arguments; and a descant on the

* Note, Part ii. p. 34, 35.

† Josh. v. 13—15. vi.

‡ Gen. xviii. xxxi. xxxii. 24—30. Hos. xii. 3—5. John i. 1. 2.

sublime and the ridiculous does not prove the thing impossible. The actual suspension of the earth's diurnal motion would be infinitely easier to omnipotence, than stopping a ship under sail would be to the mariners: and if done gradually, it would occasion no more difference to the inhabitants. We cannot reasonably expect that authentic pagan history should confirm such an event; but some traces of it are supposed discoverable in Herodotus: and the fable of Phæton, for one day driving the chariot of the sun, with the confusion which he occasioned, seems a plain intimation, that one day had occurred, unlike all that had preceded or followed it. The suspension of the earth's diurnal motion must make the moon also *appear* to stand still, if visible as it often is in the day-time: and if Joshua had been introduced, speaking in the language of the Newtonian philosophy, the argument against the antiquity of the book would have been far more plausible than it now is. Should any deny that God *could* work such a miracle; it is sufficient to answer, "Ye do err, not knowing—the "power of God." If any say, that He *would* not, on such an occasion, I inquire, "Who hath known "the mind of the LORD? or who hath been his coun-"sellor?"

JUDGES.

This book is repeatedly referred to in the New Testament, as a part of the Jewish Scriptures*, so

* Acts. xiii. 20. Heb. xi. 32.

that the proofs of the divine inspiration of the New Testament also prove, that though *anonymous* it is not *without authority*. Probably it was compiled from the records of the times, by Samuel, or under his inspection.—The writer of this book expressly asserts that Jerusalem had been taken by Judah, before Adonibezek was brought thither* : and Mr P. as expressly contradicts him† ! It appears, however, from several passages, that the men of Judah had taken and burned Jerusalem ; but that the Jebusites kept possession of some part of it, probably the hill of Zion : and that they were not expelled till the time of David‡. Mr. P. supposes the book of Judges to have been written soon after that time : and should this be granted him, how does it invalidate the authenticity of the history contained in it ? There is allowedly some difficulty in the chronology of the Judges ; yet learned men have been able to settle that matter with tolerable clearness. But how a difficulty of this kind, in a *single book of such high antiquity*, can 'prove the uncertain and fabulous state of the Bible,' does not appear to men of common capacity§.

RUTH.

Mr. P. thinks this a bungling story ; but very good judges have thought otherwise. Ruth was not a *strolling girl ;* but a woman who had been married nearly ten years, and had been long approved as a

* Judg. i. 4—8. † P. ii. p. 22, 23.
‡ Josh. xv. 63. Judg. i. 1—8. 21. 2 Sam. v. § P. ii. p. 12.

virtuous widow. It is very unfair to judge the conduct of persons who lived so long ago, by modern usages; especially as an occasion of traducing the Bible. In fact Ruth's conduct was approved by all concerned in the transactions, and her character was declared to be unexceptionable. The unaffected simplicity and piety of Boaz and his reapers are worthy of admiration and imitation. The book is replete with important instruction; and it contains the genealogy of David and of Christ, which is referred to in the New Testament.

THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL.

Mr. P.'s argument, by which he proves that the whole of these books was not written by Samuel, is absolutely conclusive: for the greatest part of the events recorded in them happened after his death. But it will by no means follow that *they are destitute of authority;* for this circumstance is altogether insufficient to preponderate against the testimony of the Jewish nation for above two thousand years at least; together with that of Christ and his apostles in the New Testament, and with the internal evidence of their authenticity and divine inspiration.

When Samuel was raised up to be the judge of Israel, a new epoch commenced: and the history of the two kings, whom he anointed, forms a crisis, as it were, between the government by judges and the full establishment of hereditary monarchy. For this reason perhaps these books, as containing an account of the revolution in which Samuel had so great

a share, were called by his name.—The titles given to the books of Scripture are not supposed to be of divine authority: so that perhaps these were improperly called the books of Samuel, and the name given them in the Septuagint and Vulgate of the first and second books of Kings, is more suitable. Probably Nathan and Gad, or other prophets in the days of David and Solomon, compiled them from the original records. The history contained in them has every mark of authenticity; they coincide with many of the Psalms, and with other parts of Scripture which refer to them; and they are replete with most important instruction.

Saul and his servant indeed cannot be justified, as to the manner in which they purposed to consult Samuel: but surely the Bible is not chargeable with the faults, which it records without approbation*. The verse relative to the word SEER was doubtless added afterwards as an explanatory note†.—Mr. P. says, 'many senseless and broken passages are found in the Bible‡;' for instance, "Saul reigned "one year; and when he had reigned two years, he "chose him two thousand men§." This, however, may fairly mean, that Saul reigned one year before any thing remarkable happened; but after he had *reigned two years*, or in *the second year of his reign*, according to the Hebrew idiom, the subsequent events took place. Such remarks can only be made, in order to prejudice superficial readers against the Scriptures.

* P. ii. p. 23, 24.
† 1 Sam. ix. 9.
‡ Note, P. ii. p. 34.
§ 1 Sam. xiii. 1.

Saul had executed the command of God by Samuel, in slaying even the women and children of Amalek: but probably from *respect to royalty*, he had spared Agag, whose "sword had made women child-"less." In this single instance, Samuel, who had long acted as chief magistrate of Israel, exercised *apparent severity*; "he hewed Agag in pieces before the "Lord:" and hatred of prophets renders Mr. P. such an humane friend to kings, that he reprobates his impartial conduct in the most virulent manner*!

Mr. P. endeavours to prove, that the writer of these books contradicts himself; because Saul did not recollect David, when he returned from slaying Goliath†.—But David was very young when he stood as a musician before Saul. He indeed became Saul's armour-bearer, but it does not appear that he entered on actual service; nor is it said that Abner had any acquaintance with him. Saul's mind was disordered, and his affairs in much confusion. Kings, especially such kings as Saul, are approached and served by so many fresh faces, that they are apt *literally* to forget their old acquaintance. Some years seem to have elapsed, from the time when David left court, to his appearance in a shepherd's dress before Saul in the army. Young persons alter greatly in a little time: yet Saul spake as if he had some confused knowledge of him; so that the charge is hardly plausible.

Mr. P.'s eloquent harangue against the 'callous 'indifference and stubbornness of priests,' contains

* P. ii. p. 60—63. 1 Sam. xv.

† Note, P. ii. p. 51. 1 Sam. xvi. xvii.

no *argument* against the divine authority of the Scriptures*. The true minister of Christ will not wish to escape reviling from the man, who calls the Bible a *blasphemous fraud*. Doubtless numbers will find their minds *tranquilized* by Mr. P.'s labours; for they will help sinners to shake off all fear of wrath, to indulge a haughty self-important spirit, and to vindicate their impiety and rebellion against God. They will in all respects operate, as the insinuation of the serpent, "Ye shall not surely die," did on the mind of Eve: but should such persons at last find themselves fatally deceived, they will not very agreeably own their obligations to this *humane deist*, at the day of judgment, and in the eternal world.

KINGS AND CHRONICLES.

Mr. P. says, 'the Jewish kings were in general a '*parcel of rascals*.' I suppose he meant to include the kings of Israel: but they were not *Jewish* kings.—The kings of Israel were indeed universally apostates from the law and instituted worship of God; and no one of them receives a good character from the sacred historian, and therefore, I have no objection to this language being applied to them.—The tyranny and persecution of the house of Ahab had been so destestable; that if a Brutus had stabbed any of them, or a modern convention had doomed them to the scaffold, their patriotism would have been applauded:

* P. ii. p. 25, 26.

but when God employed Jehu to execute vengeance on them, it becomes murder and assassination*!

Mr. P. considers the seventy descendants of Ahab as *smiling infants;* but they were in general grown men; and they were slain by the elders of Jezreel, who had been the instruments of Jezebel's tyranny, in the murder of Naboth and his sons. We have, however, no more occasion to vindicate Jehu's character, in justifying the conduct of the Lord, who employed him to punish the family of Ahab, and gave him a temporary recompense; than we have to insist on the virtue of the executioner, in justifying the punishment of a murderer.—The Bible is no more answerable for the cruelties recorded in it with marked disapprobation; than Mr. P. is for the cruelty of that party in the French convention, whose conduct he justly execrates. The severities inflicted by the Israelites on the inhabitants of Canaan, many centuries before, cannot be proved to have been the source of those wars, which were carried on between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah: for the relative situation of these kingdoms might account for them; and such bloody contests have continually taken place in other countries, in similar circumstances, though they never read or heard of the Bible.

Mr. P. finds but seventeen kings and one queen in Judah, from the death of Solomon to the captivity: I suppose he omits Jehoahaz and Jeconiah. Of the remaining seventeen, eleven died natural deaths; three were slain in battle; and three were slain by their own servants, none of whom succeeded to the

* P. ii. p. 25—27.

throne. Athaliah, one of the most detestable of usurpers and murderers, was put to death by Jehoiada.—From the accession of David to the captivity, the kingdom of Judah was continued in one family, by lineal descent from father to son, except as the sons of Josiah reigned in succession. This was a space of almost five hundred years, in which there was not a single revolution or civil war, and only one short interruption. Perhaps it would be difficult to find any thing in universal history, equal to this permanent order and regularity. How many revolutions, usurpations, murders of reigning kings by rivals and subjects, changes in the succession, and civil wars carried on with savage cruelty, are found in the history of England, within the last five hundred years? yet who thinks this a sufficient reason for reviling the English nation?

The reigns of David, Solomon, Asa, Jehosaphat, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah, amount together to three hundred and thirteen years; to which we may add the former part of Jehoash's reign, during the life of Jehoiada*: and the greatest part of this time was evidently passed, either in profound peace, or in remarkable prosperity. Let then any impartial man compare the state of Judah, from the accession of David to the death of Josiah, with the same term of years in the history of Greece, or Rome; and he will be constrained to admit, that the condition of Judah was unspeakably most desirable.

The nation of Israel acted inconsistently with their peculiar advantages, as the chosen people of God;

* 2 Kings xiii.

and their crimes are assigned in Scripture, as the reason of their numerous calamities. Indeed they were neither chosen for their *merit*, nor on their *own account* exclusively; but from the wise and holy love and mercy of God, and for the purposes of his own glory, in the benefit of other ages and nations, especially in introducing the Gospel and kingdom of his beloved Son. The wickedness of this favoured people, in direct opposition to the requirements of their law, decisively proves the depravity of human nature: and he, who *impartially* compares the history of Israel with that of other nations, will find that they were not more wicked, nor indeed so wicked by far, as many have been and are at this day. But the crimes of *idolaters* are concealed or excused; while those of *God's worshippers* are painted in the most horrid colours that ingenuity and eloquence can furnish, and aggravated by many palpable misrepresentations!

Mr. P. asserts that 'the genealogy from *Adam* to *Saul* takes up the first nine chapters of Chronicles:' when in fact the descendants of David to four generations after Zerubbabel are found in the third chapter; and the succession of the high priests till the captivity in the sixth chapter, besides other matters of the same kind! This would be unworthy of notice, did it not show that the author is not so competent to his undertaking, as many readers may suppose him. He considers the book of Chronicles as a repetition of the books of Kings: and others speak of them in the same manner. But an attentive examination of them must convince any man, that this is erroneous: for the second book of Cronicles con-

tains the history of Judah only, and of the kings that succeeded David till the captivity; and it gives a more copious and methodical account of them than is found in the books of Kings. The latter, from the division of the nation into two kingdoms, resemble an history of France and England carried on together, with continual transitions from one to the other. The former is like the history of England apart, in which the affairs of France are only mentioned, when connected with those of England.

What then shall we think of a man, who charges two historians with being impostors and liars, because they do not exactly relate the same events? Had they written the history of the same kingdom, they might surely have had the liberty to select, according to their different views, the peculiar facts which they would record: for no historian can record every thing that happens. But their histories relate to distinct subjects, and the writer of Chronicles had nothing immediately to do with the affairs of Israel. He who undertakes to write the annals of England, is not bound to relate the extraordinary measures and edicts of the French convention: and should some author in future times on this ground assert, that 'the historians of England and France did not believe one another, they knew each other too well:' the observation would not greatly recommend his candour and penetration.

The history of Jeroboam and his altar belonged to the affairs of Israel: but had the historian of Judah deemed it false, he would probably have contradicted it. The extraordinary prophecy, however, connected with it, which Josiah above three hundred years af-

ter, exactly accomplished in the view of the whole nation, sufficiently authenticates the narrative, in the judgment of all sober men. The actions of Elijah and Elisha also belonged to the history of Israel; for neither of them resided or prophesied in Judah. The writer of Chronicles, however, would not have declined recording the translation of Elijah, or the miracles of Elisha, had they fallen within his plan, lest he should be accused of lying and romancing: for he relates facts equally marvellous; such as the slaughter of Sennacherib's army by an angel, and the retrograde motion of the shadow on the dial of Ahaz, at Hezekiah's request.

Some difficulty occurs in reconciling the dates given in different places, of the time when Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat began to reign: but similar difficulties occur in many other ancient histories. Perhaps Jehoram was admitted to a share in the regal authority before he succeeded to the kingdom at his father's death; as Solomon had been before him: or perhaps some trivial error in a numeral letter has taken place, by the inadvertency of transcribers.

The historians could not properly speak of the several prophets who lived in the times of which they wrote, further than they had some concern in public affairs. But in general, they mention the prophets with peculiar respect; and uniformly ascribe the calamities of Judah and Israel to the conduct of the rulers and people in despising and persecuting them, and in hearkening to the false prophets who contradicted them. Mr. P. says, 'the name of 'Jonah is mentioned on account of the restoration of

'a tract of land by Jeroboam*.' The passage referred to is this: "Jeroboam the son of Joash, re- "stored the coast of Israel,—according to the word "of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the "hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the "prophet which was of Gathhepher†."—This is surely a very honourable mention of Jonah as a servant of the Lord, and a prophet whose predictions had been signally accomplished: whereas an inattentive reader would have supposed from Mr. P.'s account, that Jonah had only been named as concurring in some civil transaction.

Upon the whole, as far as the historians and prophets are capable of honouring each other, they certainly do it.—And did not brevity forbid, it would be easy to prove, from the prophecies contained in these books, and evidently accomplished, and from the New Testament; that they not only contain authentic history, taken from the records of Judah and Israel; but were written under the superintending inspiration of the Holy Spirit; for they certainly were contained in those Scriptures, which our Lord declared "must be fulfilled," "and could not be "broken;" and of which Paul declares that they all "were given by inspiration of God‡."

* Note, P. ii. p. 31.

† 2 Kings xiv. 25.

‡ 2 Tim. iii. 16.

EZRA AND NEHEMIAH.

Probably Ezra himself compiled the books of Chronicles, or the greatest part of them, from the public records of the nation, and other books to which he appeals as his authority: and if he chose to begin the history of the Jews subsequent to the captivity, with the same words that closed his preceding narrative, it might most reasonably be ascribed to a scrupulous regard to accuracy.

Mr. P. speaks of Ezra and Nehemiah, as if they returned *together with the first Jews from Babylon;* and he says that 'the book of Ezra was written im-'mediately after, or about five hundred and thirty-six 'before Christ, and Nehemiah was another of the re-'turned persons, who wrote an account of the *same* '*affair*.' But in fact Ezra did not return till nearly eighty years after the decree of Cyrus, according to the ablest chronologers: and it is evident by *his own account*, that the temple, after many delays was completed some time before he arrived at Jerusalem.—Nehemiah returned thirteen years afterwards; he continues his narrative from the conclusion of Ezra's history, and relates none *of the same events*. So ill informed is this writer, as to the contents of that volume he undertakes to invalidate!—The difference between the amount of those enrolled in families, and the number of the whole company, could not be *a mistake* of Ezra; and no impostor would have left so barefaced an error, if it were one. But the surplus might be Jews or Israelites, who were not able to prove their genealogies; and probably Ezra inserted

the register, made at their first return from captivity, from the public records, without any alteration.

But the register of Nehemiah has greater difficulties. The narrative leads one to expect, that a new enrolment would be made of the Jews residing at that time in Judea: but instead of this, the old register of those who returned with Zerubbabel is inserted, with some variations; and the same sum total is mentioned, though the several sums amount to thirty-one thousand and eighty-nine*. I firmly believe Nehemiah's history to be authentic and divine; but we are not authorised to expect miracles to prevent the unessential mistakes of transcribers. I therefore suspect, that by some means or other, an incorrect copy of the first register was here substituted, instead of the new register made by Nehemiah. A very slight acquaintance with critical learning, will convince any candid man, that such variations in ancient authors may generally be discovered; and that they produce no uncertainty in the great outlines of the events recorded by them. But I think it better fairly to own the difficulty, than to pass it over in silence, or to give an answer which does not satisfy my own mind. It is, however, a singular instance; and in my judgment, does not weigh a grain in counterpoise against the weight of evidence in the opposite scale.

Mr. P. seems to allow that Ezra and Nehemiah wrote the books ascribed to them; but he says they are nothing to us†. He here forgets that the prophecy of Jeremiah was extant when the book of Ezra was written, and that the events recorded by Ezra

* Ezra ii. Neh. vii.

† P. ii. p. 35.

were a *declared accomplishment of his predictions**. This is surely of some consequence in the argument. And we may add, that these two books so constantly refer to all the preceding parts of Scripture, that they conclusively prove the whole to have been then extant, and received by the Jews as authentic records of divine authority. If then Ezra and Nehemiah wrote these books soon after the captivity, we may confidently infer, that the writings of Moses, and all the historical part of the Old Testament, (except Esther,) were received by the whole Jewish nation, as a divine revelation, at least five hundred years before the birth of Christ.

ESTHER.

Mr. P. says, 'if Madam Esther thought it any honour to offer herself as a kept mistress to Ahasuerus,' &c.† Now where did he learn that she thus *offered* herself to be a kept mistress to the king? I apprehend that she was not put to her choice whether she would enter Ahasuerus' seraglio or not. Such insinuations too much resemble the conduct of *hypocritical priests*, who say, 'if the people choose to be 'deceived, let them be deceived.'—The book itself has this proof of authenticity, that the Jews to the present day observe the feast of *Purim*, in remembrance the wonderful deliverance, which God vouchsafed them by means of Esther and Mordecai.

* Ezra i. 1. † P. ii. p. 37.

CHAP. III.

From Job to Solomon's Song.

JOB.

MR. P. speaks respectfully of this book*, but tries to prove it to be of Gentile extraction. It coincides, however, so entirely with the other Scriptures, in the doctrine of human depravity, of the impossibility of any man justifying himself before God, of the Redeemer that he would stand at the latter day upon the earth, of a future resurrection, and the presumption of our reasonings concerning the works and ways of God; that it accords with no other Gentile book; and it must either be explained away as a fabulous drama, or Mr. P. and his friends will not long retain their respect for it.

The word *Satan*, he says, is not mentioned in the Bible, except in Job. The reader may see the *accuracy* of this observation by turning to the passages referred to†! But *this* appears still more fully in his

* P. i. p. 28. P. ii. 37, 38.

† 1 Chron. xxi. 1. Ps. cix. 6. Zech. iii. 1, 2.

observation, that *Pleiades*, *Orion*, and *Arcturus* are Greek names; and that the Jews were so ignorant of astronomy, that they had no words answerable to them. The learned reader will know, that no such words occur in the Hebrew Bible; and the unlearned may be assured that the original word for *Arcturus* is *Hus*, that for *Orion* is *Chesil*, and that for *Pleiades*, *Kima**.

In order to calumniate the Jews, the heathens are said 'to be a just and moral people, not addicted to 'cruelty and revenge.' What heathens are meant I know not: but the writers of the Greeks and Romans, and of every other nation whose histories are extant, represent mankind in a very different light. Romances about just and moral nations, not addicted to cruelty and revenge, may be found; but where shall we meet with an authentic history of such a people by an impartial well informed writer?

PSALMS.

If the Spirit of God spake by the Psalmist, "and 'his words were upon his tongue†," and if Christ and his apostles may be credited; the Psalms, which some persons venture to call *revengeful*, were prophecies, and denunciations of vengeance on the enemies of the Messiah and his cause. That many of them are predictions, which have been most wonderfully accomplished, no sober man can deny‡.

* Job ix. 9. xxxviii. 31, 32. † 2 Sam. xxiii. 2

‡ Ps. xxii. lxix. cx.

And whatever ridicule may be employed to degrade the Psalms, they are undoubtedly a collection of the most beautiful odes, and the most exalted strains of heavenly piety, that ever were published to mankind. Those ascribed to David bear *internal* evidence of being genuine; and it is generally understood that a considerable part of the collection was penned by other prophets and inspired persons. The absurd supposition, however, of David being the author of the hundred and thirty-seventh Psalm, gives Mr. P. an opportunity of declaiming against the imposition of the Bible, and of diverting his readers with the fancy of 'a man's walking in procession at his own 'funeral.' But is this the frame of mind, which becomes an inquirer after important truth?

PROVERBS.

Mr. P. allows that there is some wisdom in the Proverbs ascribed to Solomon; though he once decided, (at a time *when he had no Bible*,) that they were inferior to the proverbs of the Spaniards, or the maxims of Dr. Franklin*! But he supposes it to have been the fashion of that day to make *proverbs*, as it is now to make *jest-books*. If this were indeed the case, *that* should have been called the *Age of Reason*, and *this* the *age of levity and folly*: for surely wise proverbs are more reasonable, than profane, filthy, and scurrilous jests, according to the custom of modern times!

* P. i. p. 16.

Mr. P. expresses great approbation of Agur's prayer, 'as the only sensible, well-conceived, and 'well-expressed prayer in the Bible*!' I would, therefore, heartily recommend it to his constant and fervent use; with an especial attention to the clause, "remove from me vanity and lies†." If Agur were a Gentile, as he supposes, the Jews were not so bigoted, as to reject what they found good even among the heathen: but I imagine Mr. P. knows no more than the rest of us, who Agur and Lemuel were.

He adds, 'The Jews never prayed but when they 'were in trouble; and never for any thing but victo-'ry, vengeance, and riches!'—All, who deem prayer their duty and privilege, will be peculiarly earnest in it during special trials, though they never wholly neglect it: and nations engaged in war, if they trust in God and appeal to him, must pray for victory.—Most of the prayers of this kind, recorded in Scripture, were presented by the rulers of Israel, when assaulted by injurious and blasphemous invaders: few prayers for vengeance can be found, which are not evident predictions, or warnings to the enemies of God: and scarcely any for riches, unless exemption from famine, and the blessings of plentiful harvest be so called. Solomon's prayer for *wisdom*, and not for riches, long life, or the life of his enemies, was not offered in trouble. Mr. P. commends the nineteenth Psalm‡, yet the latter part of it is a prayer, neither for victory, vengeance, nor riches: and no one, conversant in the Scripture, can be at a loss for instances of a similar kind. He who thus wantonly

* P. ii. p. 39. † Prov. xxx. 7, 9. ‡ P. ii. p. 28, 29.

slanders a whole nation, is not the most proper person to declaim against the wickedness of priests and prophets.

ECCLESIASTES*.

Mr. P treats Ecclesiastes, as the reflection of a worn out debauchee, and supposes the exclamation, "All is vanity," to relate entirely to Solomon's thousand wives and concubines: and he represents him, not as a *penitent* but as *melancholy*. But in fact, these wives and concubines are but once hinted at; while the preacher shows in the most convincing and affecting manner, from experience and the nature of things, that magnificence, authority, and sensual indulgence, and even science and wisdom, unless connected with true religion, are *vanity and vexation of spirit:* and he closes with exhorting the reader in the prospect of a future judgment, to "fear God, "and keep his commandments; for this is the whole "duty of man."

Far be it from me to vindicate Solomon in that conduct, of which he seems to have deeply repented: yet he is represented in Scripture, as drawn aside in his *old age*, and not as *licentious in his youth*. Probably his immense seraglio was principally a foolish affectation of superior magnificence, and a conformity to the eastern customs; while some of his women gained the ascendency over him, and induced him, towards the decline of life to commit those crimes, from which he had before been exempt.

* P. ii. p. 41, 42.

SOLOMON'S SONG*.

Our author is very merry upon *Solomon's Songs*, as he calls this book; and I agree with him, that he wants the tunes, and cannot sing such songs: that is, his heart is not in tune for them†. As this book is not quoted in the New Testament, and as few derive benefit from it till they have learned divine truth from other Scriptures; I shall not enter into any further argument about it: though I firmly believe it to be a very useful part of God's word.

The sacred writers are not accountable for the order in which the several books are placed in the Old Testament: nor are they arranged in the same manner in the Hebrew Bible, as in our translation. If, therefore, Solomon's Song has been misplaced; that does not at all disprove the divine inspiration of the holy Scriptures, which is the point I have undertaken to defend.

* P. ii. p. 42, 43. † Rev. i. 5. v. 9—14. xiv. 3.

CHAP. IV.

The Prophets.

ISAIAH.

It is probable, that Mr. P. is the first writer, capable of attracting the public notice, who has deemed the book of Isaiah to be 'bombastical rant, extravagant metaphor, such stuff as a school-boy would have been scarcely excusable for writing*! I shall, however, leave him to settle this point with those able critics, and admired judges of fine writing, who have decidedly preferred many parts of Isaiah's poetry, for sublimity and beauty, to all other compositions now extant in the world.

Occasional poems and sermons are not always arranged in very regular order: some able authors have published volumes of miscellanies; and we ought not to judge of an eastern writer by *our* rules of method. A *cursory* perusal will not always enable a man to discern the drift and plan of an author, when they may be clearly ascertained upon a more accurate in-

* P. ii. p. 43.

vestigation; and sometimes the conclusion of one poem or message, and the beginning of another, escape the notice of a hasty reader: so that there may be much more order and connexion in this book, than Mr. P. supposes. The historical part was evidently added to illustrate the prophecies, and to *prevent*, not *make* confusion*.

It is very easy to ridicule *the burden of Damascus*, *the burden of Moab*, or *the burden of Babylon;* but not so easy to show, by what means the writer could foresee, that Babylon, then growing in greatness, and shortly to be the metropolis of the world, would at length be "swept with the besom of destruction," as it actually hath been; so that it is not at present certainly known, where that vast and magnificent city once stood!! This single prophecy amounts to a *demonstration*, that God spake by the prophet Isaiah.

The prediction of Cyrus by name, above an hundred years before his birth, if allowed to have been written by Isaiah, would have subverted our author's whole system. Like an able general, therefore, he forms a stratagem of seizing our artillery, and employing it against us! He confidently *asserts*, (and that passes for *proof* with many readers,) that the whole passage was written an hundred and fifty years after Isaiah's death, in compliment to Cyrus†!

But the connexion of these predictions‡, with the whole scope of the prophet's address to the people in the name of JEHOVAH, tends to expose the absurdity of this bold assertion. The God of Israel repeatedly appeals to *prophecies already accomplished*, as proofs

* P. ii. p. 43, 44. † P. ii. p. 44, 45. ‡ Is. xliv. 28. xlv. 1—4.

of his deity in opposition to the claims of idols: he adds, "New things do I declare, before they come "to pass I tell you of them:" He thus challenges his rivals, the idols of the nations, saying, "Shew "the things that are to come hereafter, that we may "know that ye are gods*:" and after various other predictions, he delivers that in question, with the greatest solemnity, as a proof of his eternal power and Godhead.

Had this prophecy stood *single* in the writings of Isaiah, this pretence might have been rather more plausible: but the whole book is replete with predictions at least equally plain, and verified by the events in the most astonishing manner! So that it might as reasonably be asserted, that the fifty-third chapter was written after the crucifixion of Christ, and the establishment of his religion; or the fourteenth after the entire desolation of Babylon: as that the prediction concerning Cyrus was added after he had conquered the Chaldean monarchy.

The testimony of the Jews, through every age to this book as genuine, though it contains such numerous prophecies, which were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, sufficiently determines that point with all sober and competent judges; for how could it be possible to persuade a whole nation that they had always been acquainted with the prediction, during the course of an hundred and fifty years, if they had never before heard any thing of it? But infidels seem to *take it for granted*, that if priests be *sufficiently knavish* to attempt imposition, the people will always be found

* Is. xli. 23. xliii. 9.

sufficiently foolish to swallow their impostures without examination! whereas much art has ever been found necessary for such attempts: the prophecies of impostors have always been ambiguous; and the miracles to which they pretended, either doubtful in their nature, or wrought only before a few individuals who were friendly to the cause.

It may also be added, that a man must have taken a singular method of complimenting a great prince; who should forge predictions, tending to pour contempt on his religion, and to degrade the gods, to which he was continually sacrificing.

Mr. P. in speaking of our Lord's miraculous conception, as predicted by Isaiah, uses these words, 'This doctrine has stained every spot in Christen-'dom with blood, and marked it with desolation.'—Blood enough has, alas! been shed by men called Christians! but this doctrine has seldom been so much as the pretence of it. The Athanasians and Arians had too acrimonious contests: but both parties agreed in the miraculous conception, and in this application of Isaiah's prophecy. The papal antichrist has been drunk with the blood of martyrs: but where has the denial of the miraculous conception of Christ been so much as the pretext of these outrages? The Socinians have *only of late* denied the miraculous conception; though many of them, and others likewise, have understood Matthew, as quoting Isaiah by way of accommodation; but they have not in many instances been harrassed with bloody desolating persecution. Indeed, there would be some difficulty in precisely pointing out a dozen spots in Christendom,

stained with blood, and marked with desolation *on this account.*

Should we grant, that the prophecy had a subordinate reference to events which took place soon after it was delivered*: it would still be true, that the literal and exact accomplishment can only be found in that great event, to which the evangelist applies it. Some measure of obscurity seems adapted to the nature of prophecy, prior to its fulfilment: and, though the Virgin's Son was named JESUS; yet he was EMMANUEL, in his person and character, and has been so called with fervent adoring love and gratitude by tens of thousands in all succeeding generations.

Mr. P. has brought a direct charge of imposition and falsehood against Isaiah, which requires some notice.—The kings of Israel and Syria confederated to invade Judah, to destroy the family of David, and make the son of Tabeal king of Judah: and Isaiah predicted, that this counsel should not stand; that the kingdom of Israel should come to an end in seventy-five years; that the confederate princes should be destroyed; and that the family of David should be preserved till the coming of Emmanuel. At the same time, however, he declared to Ahaz and his princes, that "if they would not believe, they should not be "established."—But we find†, that "the Lord deli-"vered Ahaz into the hands of the king of Syria, and "into the hand of the king of Israel;" and that they made most dreadful havoc of the Jews, and took an immense number of captives:—on this ground Mr. P. says, 'the two kings *did succeed*, Ahaz was defeat-

* Is. vii. 14. † 2 Chron. xxviii.

'ed and *destroyed*. Thus much for this lying pro-'phet, and his book of falsehoods*.' But we ask, did the two kings succeed *in dethroning Ahaz, destroying the family of David, and advancing the son of Tabeal to the throne?* Ahaz indeed was not established, because he did not believe: he was *defeated*, but he was not *destroyed;* for he survived both the confederate princes many years, and died a natural death. Pekah, king of Israel, *induced by the humane remonstrances of a prophet*, sent back the prisoners, refreshed and clothed from the spoil; and he was slain by Hosea in the fourth year of Ahaz; as Rezin king of Syria was by Tiglath-Pilezer about the same time. Within the prescribed years, the Assyrians finally destroyed the kingdom of Israel, and the family of David was preserved till the birth of Emmanuel. Isaiah's predictions were, therefore, most circumstantially fulfilled during the course of above seven hundred years: and his accuser was either grossly ignorant of his subject, or very desirous of misleading his readers.

JEREMIAH†.

Jeremiah had prophecied about forty years, when Jerusalem was taken: and, as he had been the faithful friend of his country, and of succeeding princes, for so long a time; it requires something more than Mr. P.'s assertion to convince an impartial person, that he became a traitor at last; especially as he refused the favours offered him by Nebuchadnezzar, after the city was desolated according to his predictions.

* P. ii. p. 40. † P. ii. p. 47—54.

The Lord declares by the prophet, that his promises and threatenings *to nations* contain an implied condition; so that national repentance would avert threatened judgments, and national wickedness forfeit promised mercies*. This Mr. P. calls 'an absurd 'subterfuge of the prophet.' But surely it was a salutary warning and an encouraging instruction both to Israel and to other nations. *Had the people repented, and yet judgments had come on them; or had they escaped judgments without repentance;* the prophet would have had no subterfuge: and if he had denounced vengeace without any intimation of mercy; the unrelenting spirit of prophets would have furnished a subject for declamation.

The disorder charged on this book, might arise from the conduct of those, who after Jeremiah's death, put his detached messages together, without much regard to the order in which they were delivered.—His *predictions*, however, are generally *dated*, though his *sermons* are not.

Mr. P. accuses Jeremiah of contradicting himself, because two different accounts are given of his imprisonment by Zedekiah: but nothing can be more evident than that he was twice imprisoned; once in the house of Jonathan the scribe, whence he was liberated to the court of the prison of Zedekiah; the second time in the dungeon of Malchijah the son of Hammeleck, whence he was freed by Ebed-meleck†.

Mr. P. undertakes to prove, by the example of Jeremiah, that 'a man of God could tell a lie;' and if he had succeeded, it would not much have served

* Jer. xviii. 7, 8. † Jer. xxxvii. xxxviii.

his cause, unless he could also have proved that he *vindicated* it: for believers do not consider the sacred writers as *impeccable*, though they wrote under an infallible guidance. His attempt, however, is completely unsuccessful. Zedekiah directed the prophet to say to the princes, 'I presented my supplication be-" fore the king, that he would not cause me to return " to Jonathan's house to die there;" and "he told " them according to all the words the king command-" ed."—'Now,' says Mr. P. 'Jeremiah did not *go* ' *to Zedekiah* to make his supplication:' true; neither did he say that he *went for that purpose:* but he adds, 'neither did he make it.' Here some will believe Jeremiah, who said "he did make his suppli-" cation to the king:" and some will credit Mr. P. when he says, 'he did not make it.' For my part I believe *the prophet*, considering him as the best informed of the two, and perceiving no reason to suspect his veracity. And even a *man of God* is not bound to tell an impertinent inquirer all he knows.

Mr. P. next accuses Jeremiah of delivering false predictions. The prophet had told Zedekiah, that " his eyes should behold the eyes of the king of Bab-" ylon, and that he should speak to him mouth to " mouth; that he should go to Babylon: that he should " not die by the sword, but in peace, and that they " should burn odours for him and lament him*."—Mr. P. contrasts this prophecy with the history of the event†, and adds, 'what can we say of these ' prophets, but that they are impostors and liars‡?' Yet the prediction was fulfilled most exactly; for

* Jer. xxxiv. † Jer. iii. 10, 11. ‡ P. ii. p. 53.

Zedekiah must have seen the eyes of the king of Babylon, when the latter slew his sons *before his eyes:* he was carried to Babylon where he died, not by the sword, but in peace; and there can be no reasonable doubt, but he received funeral honours from the captive Jews, by the permission of the king of Babylon.

Ezekiel also foretold, that "Zedekiah should not "see Babylon, though he should die there*." And some years ago I wrote thus, 'Perhaps Zedekiah fancied the two prophets contradicted each other, and 'so disregarded both; but both were exactly accomplished, when he was brought to Nebuchadnezzar 'at Riblah, had his eyes put out, and was carried to 'Babylon†.' I have since that time entertained some doubts, whether I had not ascribed to Zedekiah a degree of *inattention*, beyond all probability. Mr. P. however, has actually far exceeded it.

He next asserts, that 'Jeremiah joined himself to 'Nebuchadnezzar, and went about prophesying for 'him among the Egyptians.' This representation of Jeremiah's conduct contradicts in express terms the only narrative we have of those events. He refused the friendly offer of Nebuzar-adan; and with a patriotism which would have been admired in any man, except a prophet or a priest, he chose to cast his lot among the remnant of his distressed countrymen. He did all in his power to prevent their migration into Egypt, and was at length carried along with them by force. There indeed he prophesied against the Egyptians and other nations, and especially *against the Babylonians*, without the least advantage or attention

* Ezek. xii. 13. † Family Bible.

from Nebuchadnezzar; and these prophecies, with their *remote* but exact accomplishment, will stand to the end of time as demonstrations that Jeremiah spake by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Mr. P. represents the prophets as party men in politics, and he produces as an instance the prophet from Judah, who went to Jeroboam*. No doubt he took part with the worshippers of JEHOVAH against the devotees of the golden calves: but the old prophet at Bethel does not seem to have *sided* with Jeroboam, though he had not courage to protest against his idolatry. His assertion, that the prophet of Judah was 'found dead by the contrivance of the pro-'phet of Israel, who no doubt called him a lying pro-'phet" is absurd in the extreme, and directly contradicts the whole narrative.

Mr. P. next attacks Elisha as a *Judahmite* prophet, though he spent his life in Israel, and never at all prophesied in Judah!—Joram the son of Ahab was a very wicked man and a most incorrigible idolater: Jehoshaphat, though faulty in forming connexions with him and his family, was a most pious and equitable prince. When, therefore, these two kings, with the king of Edom, applied to Elisha in extreme distress†, he showed respect to Jehoshaphat, but would show none to Joram. In any other man Mr. P. would have admired the noble spirit evinced by his conduct: but in this case he calls it 'the venom and vul-'garity of a party prophet!'

The prophet, probably finding himself discomposed by recollecting the idolatries and persecutions

* 1 Kings xiii. † 2 Kings iii.

of Ahab's family, called for a *minstrel*, that his serenity might be restored, and his mind prepared for the prophetic impulse. Mr. P. strangely mistakes the *minstrel*, or player on an instrument, for the instrument itself: and adds, 'Elisha said, (singing most 'probably to the tune he was playing,) Thus saith 'the Lord, make the valley full of ditches—without 'either *farce* or *fiddle*, the way to get water was to 'dig for it.'—Does this jumble of mistake and raillery require any answer? Neither the kings nor their officers expected to find water by digging there, and how came Elisha by his superior discernment? The Moabites deceived by this singular appearance of the water, rushed upon their destruction; which would not have been the case, had water been generally observed in that place. Whole armies have been known to perish, for want of water, in those very deserts; and it is indeed self-evident, that this army was preserved, and rendered victorious, either by the sagacity of the prophet, or by the word which the Lord spake by him: yet he must be branded as *venomous* and *virulent*, for protesting against Joram's crimes, in far milder language, than Mr, P. or his friends have used against the kings of France or England?

The conduct of Elisha, in cursing the children in the name of the Lord, has been objected to by more candid and serious men than Mr. P. and therefore requires some consideration. These children, or *young persons, immediately after Elijah's translation*, reproached Elisha with his baldness, and bade him *go up, or ascend*; as if they had said, 'a good rid-'dance of all prophets*.' They had been evidently

* 2 Kings ii. 23.

taught by their idolatrous parents to revile the prophets of JEHOVAH; their enmity was become desperate: and if true religion be important, it was proper to apply some effectual remedy to the inveterate evil. If the prophet had cursed them *in his own spirit*, would JEHOVAH have concurred in his malignity? Were the she-bears at his command? Would any consequences have followed? Had the prophet slain the children himself, or employed any of his party in putting them to death, *there would have been some pretence for* these bitter accusations: but as the case stands, the justice of God is directly arraigned; for he was the *only agent* in the business.—If the children had died of the fever, the affair would not have been noticed: yet the solemnity of a sentence and execution, while it was no severer punishment to them, was far more calculated to make an useful impression on their survivors.

EZEKIEL AND DANIEL*.

Mr. P. is of opinion that the books of Ezekiel and Daniel are *genuine*. This concession may perhaps surprise such persons, as are not aware of the fecundity of his genius; especially as Daniel's prophecies have received so circumstantial an accomplishment, that an ancient opposer of christianity had no way of escaping conviction, but by asserting, contrary to all proof, that they were written after the events predicted in them! But Mr. P. perhaps afraid lest his reader's attention should flag, has prepared a new fund of

* P. ii. p. 57—60.

amusement, by *imagining* these books to contain a *political cypher* or *secret alphabet*, under the pretence of dreams and visions, and that they relate to plans about recovering Jerusalem. Hence he infers, that we 'have nothing to do with them:' and provided that be the inference, numbers will excuse the want of proof and probability.

It is, however, very wonderful, that these *political devices* should contain such animated exhortations and fervent prayers; and above all so many prophecies, that have been ever since fulfilling! Egypt is become a *base* kingdom, and has been subject to a foreign yoke almost from the time when the prophet wrote*. Tyre, that prosperous commercial city, is now a place for fishermen to dry their nets†. And the four great monarchies, Alexander's conquests, and the affairs of his successors; the cutting off of the Messiah, and the desolation of Jerusalem after seventy weeks, have exactly accomplished Daniel's predictions. Surely then Mr. P. had a mind to make trial of the credulity of mankind, in this whimsical absurdity!

Ezekiel is supposed to have been carried captive eleven years before the desolation of Jerusalem, and Daniel about eighteen‡; and not 'both together nine 'years before,' as Mr. P. erroneously states it. Daniel was employed at court, and Ezekiel lived at a distance, and we do not read of any intercourse between them. The first six chapters of Daniel are *historical*, and relate to miraculous interpositions of God in behalf of his people; and not the most remote intimation of a project for recovering Jerusa-

* Ezek. xxxiv. 14, 15. † Ezek. xxvi. 14. ‡ Ezek. i. 2. Dan. i.

lem is found in the whole book. Many of Ezekiel's visions, and all Daniel's are dated after the desolation of Jerusalem; when the poor dispersed captives could have no hope of recovering or rebuilding that city by any stratagem: nay, some of Daniel's visions are dated after the return of the Jews from Babylon, by the decree of Cyrus.

Mr. P. has no right to find fault with romantic interpretations of Scripture; after having given the most *ridiculous exposition* of Ezekiel's vision, that the world has yet seen! His own words may justly be retorted on him. 'Such applications of Scripture 'shew the fraud or extreme folly, to which the cre-'dulity of modern infidelity can go!'

Mr. P. asserts that Ezekiel's prediction concerning the forty year's desolation of Egypt never came to pass: but it requires a complete knowledge of all that happened in those ages to prove this.—It is certain that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Egypt, and carried multitudes of its inhabitants captives: forty years from that time brings us to the reign of Cyrus; when it is probable that the Egyptians, as well as the Jews, were allowed to return home, and inhabit their wasted country*. And is it not more rational to elucidate the obscurity of history by this prophecy; than to make the obscurity of history an argument against a prophecy, of which every other part, as contained in four chapters, has most certainly been accomplished? Especially *when* the next verse is fulfilling at this present day: "Egypt shall be the basest of the "kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself any more "among the nations."

* Ezek. xxix. 11—14.

JONAH.*

Mr. P. having greatly diverted himself and his readers, with the story of *Jonah and his whale; seriously* undertakes to prove, that the whole book was a Gentile fable, *intended* to ridicule and satirize the Jews and their prophets† !

Jonah's conduct, in various particulars, admits of no excuse; yet it is much easier to condemn him, that it would have been to have acted properly in his circumstances. The mariners deserve commendation for their desire to preserve his life: but his narrative, and his manner of speaking concerning the Lord, must have impressed them with awe, lest they should provoke the God of Israel, by putting his servant to death.

The mariners at first "called every man *upon his* "*god;*" but after they had heard the words of Jonah, they "feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a "sacrifice to JEHOVAH, and made vows." They had been idolaters; but probably were converted to the true religion by what they saw and heard on this occasion.

The Almighty God was certainly able to prepare a great fish to swallow Jonah, and could preserve him alive to the third day in its belly; however profane scoffers may ridicule the narrative. The fables of Hercules swallowed by a sea-monster, and ship-wrecked Arion carried to shore by a dolphin, seem to have been derived from the vague report of this transaction.

* P. i. p. 59. † P. ii. p. 60—63.

Jonah's conduct and disposition at Nineveh too much 'resembled that malevolent spirit, that blackness of character, which men ascribe—to the devil;' that is, depraved nature too much showed itself. Yet he should not be blamed for delivering his message faithfully. His conduct is unparalleled in Scripture; no one there mentioned with approbation, showed so proud, angry, impatient, self-seeking, and presumptuous a disposition, as he did.—Jeremiah appealed to the Lord, "that he had not desired the woful day," which he predicted: he declared, that if the people "would not hear, he would weep in "secret places for their pride;" and his lamentations evince his sincerity. Moses preferred death to the destruction of his ungrateful countrymen, even with the greatest advantage to himself and family. "Rivers of waters ran down David's eyes be-"cause men kept not God's law:" and Paul had continual heaviness and sorrow of heart on account of his unbelieving countrymen. So that *prophesying evil* does not incline men *to wish for it:* because all do not prefer their own credit to the glory of God and the happiness of multitudes, as Jonah did most wickedly on one occasion.

The Creator's *partiality*, if Mr. P. will use that word, appears as much in other histories as in that of the Bible. The Lord does certainly afford advantages to some nations and individuals, which he withholds from others: but the Scripture never represents him as conniving at the sins of his favoured nation, or punishing the guiltless because they did not belong to it. On the contrary, he says, "You only

" have I known of all the families of the earth; there-
" fore I will punish you for all your iniquities*."

Learned men agree that *three days, and three nights*, in the Hebrew idiom, denote any portion of time ending on the third day: and if neither ancient nor modern Jews object *on this ground*, to the application of the history of Jonah to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; it does not seem very candid in others to attempt it. Our Lord's express testimony confirms the whole account, so that it stands on all the evidence of the New Testament: and the history is replete with most important instruction.

As to the other *minor prophets*, Mr. P. leaves them ' to sleep undisturbed in the laps of their nurses the ' priests;' content with having ridiculed *the idea of the greater and lesser prophets*†, which common sense explains to mean no more, than that the books of the latter are much shorter than those of the former.

' I have now,' says this confident writer, ' gone ' through the Bible, as a man would go through a ' wood, with an axe on his shoulder, and fell trees‡;' a man, *going through a wood with an axe on his shoulder*, differs widely from *cutting down the whole wood*§: and Mr. P.'s cavils, against the several books in the Bible, differ as widely from subverting their authority by unanswerable arguments. If he supposes that he hath done his work; " It is as when an hungry man " dreameth that he eateth; but he awaketh and his " soul is empty."

For I appeal to every impartial man, who will bestow pains fairly to investigate the subject, whether

* Amos iii. 2. † P. i. p. 18. ‡ P. ii. p. 61. § P. i. p. 18.

Mr. P. has substantiated a single charge against the writers of the Old Testament; except as its contents do not accord to men's common opinions; its arrangement is not formed on modern notions of method; and some trivial alterations have taken place in the text.

Convinced of Mr. P.'s talents and determined resolution in his undertakings, and conscious, that a joyless life and hopeless death must be the consequence, if the only source of my confidence and consolation could be torn from me; I opened these books with a sort of trepidation. But I must declare, that I never felt a firmer assurance that the Bible is the word of God, than I do at this moment; having found that misapprehension, misrepresentation, wit, declamation, and invective, are the sum total, which the keenest capacity and most virulent enmity can produce against it.

CHAP. V.

The New Testament.

THE GOSPELS.

MR. P. opens his attack on this part of Scripture by saying, 'The New Testament, they tell us, is 'founded on the prophecies of the old; if so, it must 'follow the fate of its foundation*.'—Injudicious concessions have often been made by the friends of truth: and this seems to be one. The prophecies of the Old Testament prepared the way for the coming of Christ; and, as accomplished in him, they constitute an unanswerable proof that christianity is a divine revelation: and the testimony of our Lord and his apostles so confirms the divine inspiration of the Old Testament, that if strict *demonstration* could be brought against it, believers would be reduced to great difficulty; but that is impossible.—In other respects the New Testament stands on its own basis:

* P. ii. p. 64.

internal and external evidence confirm most fully its divine original; and this *alone* might be sufficient to support the authority of the Old Testament also, if we had not other proof in abundance. But indeed the two parts of Scripture give stability and symmetry to each other. The Old Testament led to an expectation of the New, as its completion; the New Testament presupposes the truth of the history, and the divine authority of the laws, ordinances, and instructions of the Old.

Mr. P. admits in an hesitating manner that such a person as Christ might exist: adding, that 'there is 'no ground either to believe or disbelieve* !' Indeed!—Why, was the existence of any one man since the creation so undeniably proved? It would be comparatively a moderate degree of skepticism, to doubt the existence of Alexander, Julius Cæsar, or Mahomet; for the effect of their existence, on the state of mankind in all succeeding ages, is very small, compared with that produced by christianity: and how could that religion have existed, if Christ had not existed?

It is now generally allowed, that Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph in the line of Solomon, and Luke that of Mary in the line of Nathan, sons of David. The method in use among the Jews, in keeping their registers, required the name of Joseph to be inserted, instead of Mary his wife, as constituting a link in the chain or pedigree: and it was proper that both genealogies should be given. This solution of the difficulty is so obvious and satisfactory, that it is wonder-

* P. ii. p. 65.

ful any difference in sentiment should have prevailed among learned men on the subject. The writers of the New Testament would not have had common sense, if they had inserted manifest contradictions in their narratives: and forgery could have no occasion for them, as it would have been very easy for one of them to copy from the others. Indeed lists of names are strange things to forge! Though I firmly believe that the evangelists wrote by the superintending inspiration of the Holy Spirit: I suppose they copied such matters from the public registers: and as none of the ancient enemies of christianity attempted to disprove these genealogies, while the original registers existed; it will be wonderful, if *proof* should now be given that they were falsified.

The genealogy of Matthew, from David to Christ, contains no more than twenty-seven generations, and Mr. P. asserts on this account that 'it is not so much 'as a reasonable lie:' for he computes, that upon an average, every one in this succession lived to the age of forty, before his *eldest son* was born. He should have said, his *eldest surviving son*, yet that would have been but little to the purpose. For Solomon was not David's eldest son; Abijah was not Rehoboam's*: and after the captivity, the line might be continued in the younger male branches. We know also from the history, that the three immediate successors of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat, are omitted in the genealogy, it is uncertain on what account; as is likewise Jehoiakim the father of Jeconiah. There were, therefore, nineteen generations from David to

* 2 Chron. xi. 18—21.

the captivity: and similar omissions might occur in the subsequent part of the genealogy.

Mr. P. to strengthen this argument asserts, that 'Solomon had his house full of wives and mistresses 'at the age of one and twenty.' But where did he learn this? Solomon had one wife when his father died, and soon after he married Pharaoh's daughter. He might have many other wives and concubines at the same time for any thing we know; but the Scripture no where mentions them.

Mr. P.'s language concerning the miraculous conception of Christ, is such a mixture of misrepresentation, absurdity, indecency, and blasphemous impiety, as perhaps never was equalled! It deserves and requires no answer: and it is too vile even to bear being further exposed to just contempt and abhorrence!

The Holy Ghost has hitherto been supposed to be, either *a divine person, according to the doctrine of the Trinity*, or *a created spirit of supra-angelic dignity*; or *a peculiar mode of divine operation*: but who ever thought of understanding that expression to mean *a ghost*, or *departed spirit*, according to the vulgar acceptation of the word?—The language of Scripture teaches us nothing more, than that the divine power of the Holy Spirit *miraculously* produced the human nature of Christ in the womb of the virgin; and that he was thus *truly man*, though conceived and born without the defilement, which is communicated to all the natural descendants of fallen Adam.

Had Mary's testimony to the appearance of the angel, and the miracle of her pregnancy, been *single and unsupported*, it would not have been entitled to

credit: but connected with the preceding prophecies, the testimony of Zacharias and Elizabeth, and the well-known circumstances attending the birth of John Baptist, and confirmed by all the subsequent events, it becomes credible in the highest degree: for every proof of christianity authenticates it.

Mr. P. touches but slightly on the *disagreement* of the evangelists, in their histories of the events that occurred from the birth to the death of Christ: but it is an old objection which must not pass unnoticed. Had the four evangelists recorded precisely the same miracles, discourses, and events, with the same circumstances; the charge of forgery would have been more plausible. If four authors should give us as many histories of certain interesting transactions in China or Japan, not writing by concert, each would record such facts as had more immediately fallen under his observation, with such circumstances as most engaged his attention; and each would follow his own peculiar plan. When these histories were published, events would be found recorded in one, which were not mentioned in the other, with *apparent* incongruities, which a little attention might reconcile; and the order of the narrative would not be exactly the same in them all. And on this ground a man might stand forth, and affirm that they were impostures and contradictory legends.—Now suppose four other men to give each an account of some transactions in a remote part of the world; and no difference at all to be found in their books, but that of style and manner; and another person should on this ground exclaim, 'These men have combined to deceive us: had 'not this been the case, there must have been some

'variations in their narrative:' we might leave it to any man of candour to determine which of these objections would be most reasonable.

Industry, ingenuity, and malice have for ages, been employed, in endeavouring to prove the evangelists inconsistent with each other: but not a single *contradiction* has hitherto been proved upon them. Their circumstantial variations, in relating the same event, only evince that they did not copy from one another. They recorded those facts, which most impressed their own minds as important: they wrote in succession, and did not think the preceding historians needed any vouchers: and it suited their design, to omit many things for the sake of brevity, and that they might relate others of equal moment.—But one thing is fact. These four men, of whom such contemptuous things are spoken, have done, without appearing to have intended it, what was never performed by any authors before or since. They have drawn a perfect human character, without a single flaw! They have given the history of one, whose spirit, words, and actions, were in every particular exactly what they ought to have been! who always did the very thing which was proper, and in the best manner imaginable! who never once deviated from the most consummate wisdom, purity, benevolence, compassion, meekness, humility, fortitude, patience, piety, zeal, and every other excellency! and who in no instance let one virtue or holy disposition intrench on another; but exercised them all in entire harmony and exact proportion! The more the histories of the evangelists are examined, the clearer will this appear: and the more evidently will it be perceived,

that they all coincide in the view which they give of their Lord's character. This subject challenges investigation, and sets infidelity at defiance! Either these four men exceeded in genius and capacity all the writers that ever lived; or they wrote under the special guidance of divine inspiration: for without labour or affectation they have effected, what hath baffled all others, who have set themselves purposely to accomplish it.

Indeed that man seems to have a peculiarly vitiated taste in *composition*, who does not admire the simplicity connected with sublimity, with which the evangelists record the miracles of Christ. I should think that even infidels of genius must be struck with the *manner*, in which such astonishing events are related.

The story of Herod's slaying the children *rests* on Matthew's testimony, and on the proofs of *his divine inspiration:* it accords perfectly to the character of that bloody tyrant! and it was not necessary that the succeeding evangelists should repeat it. John Baptist was born at Hebron, at a considerable distance from *the coast of Bethlehem;* so that Mr. P.'s attempt to prove, from his preservation, that the story belies itself, is ridiculous in the extreme.

Had the evangelists expressly undertaken to give an exact copy of the inscription over the cross of Christ; nothing could have been more easy: but they perfectly agree as to the import of it, which is quite sufficient.

Mr. P. asserts, that 'Peter was the only one of the 'men called apostles, who appears to have been near 'the spot at the crucifixion.' Yet John tells us, that he witnessed the whole scene, and received the or-

clers of his dying Lord concerning his mother. 'We 'may infer from these circumstances, trivial as they 'are,' that this author knows very little about the subject on which he writes: and numerous other instances might be adduced, if it were worth while.

Peter denied his Lord with cursing and swearing; that is, he disclaimed all acquaintance with him; but he did not deny him to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God. How great soever his crime was; his ingenuous confession of it, and his subsequent labours and sufferings in the cause of Christ, sufficiently entitle him to credit, in his testimony both to the crucifixion and resurrection: but his testimony is a very small part of the evidence on which our faith is surely founded.

Different methods have been taken to reconcile the sixth hour, mentioned by John, with the accounts of the time of our Lord's crucifixion, as stated by the other evangelists: but if it be allowed a trivial error in some transcriber, which might easily take place in a *numeral letter;* what doubt can that excite in a serious mind as to the authenticity of a narrative, attested in all its leading parts, by four distinct historians? Impostors would have avoided such observable inaccuracies*.

Matthew is generally allowed to have written before the other evangelists: had they not, therefore, credited his account of the miracles attending Christ's death; they would have contradicted it: for the circumstances which he related were of so extraordina-

* P. ii. p. 71.

ry and public a nature, that they could not have escaped detection, if they had been false*.

It would have degraded the sacred history, to have noticed such subjects, as Mr. P. proposes in his questions, concerning the saints that arose, and came out of the graves after Christ's resurrection. Our Lord's reply to the frivolous objection of the Sadducees may suffice to answer them all. "Ye do err, not "knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God."—We may indeed add, that there is no reasonable doubt, but these risen saints accompanied their ascending Lord, to grace his triumphs, as the first-fruits of his resurrection. Mr. P. says, 'Had it been Mo-'ses and Aaron, and Joshua, and Samuel, and Da-'vid,' (supposing them to have appeared to the people,) 'not an unconverted Jew had remained in all 'Jerusalem.' It might be asked, how the Jews could have *known* these risen saints to have been Moses and Aaron, &c. except by their own testimony, or by immediate revelation? But waving this: the reader has his option, whether he will credit this assertion of Mr. P. or the words of Christ, "if they believe "not Moses and the prophets; neither would they "be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

Matthew alone relates the account of the Roman soldiers who guarded the sepulchre: but does this prove, 'that according to the other evangelists *there* '*were none?*' Will not common sense determine, that *their* silence allows the truth of *his* narrative? By publishing his Gospel, and relating the base conduct of the priests and rulers, Matthew had openly

* P. ii. p. 72.

challenged them to disprove it if they could: but this they never attempted; and surely they would not have silently endured so disgraceful an imputation, if they had not had substantial reasons for their conduct.

The absurdity of the story, which the rulers put into the mouth of the soldiers, is sufficiently evident: but if men act absurdly, historians are not to blame for recording their actions. The evangelist appealed to the whole nation, that the story was notorious; that it had been propagated immediately after the body of Christ was missing; and that it had continued current till the time when he published his narrative. It is most evident that some of the soldiers had affirmed, they were paid for circulating it: none of them were called to account, that we know of, for this or any other part of their conduct: and no man stepped forth to say, that such a story had not been propagated, or was not current; that the priests had not bribed the soldiers to spread it; or that they could give a more satisfactory account of the manner in which the body of Jesus had been removed. How could men have been persuaded that such a report had long been current, if they had never before heard of it? or that it was still current, if every body knew it was not so? Or how could an anonymous writer, or rather one who assumed another man's name, have thus appealed to facts, as well kown when his work was published, aud for some time before; if such facts had been mere forgeries?—Mr. P. indeed argues from the expression, "until this day," that Matthew did not write the Gospel, and that it was manufactured long afterwards. But *seven* or *eight* years

would suffice in this case, and warrant a man to use such words. We have abundant proof of the antiquity and genuineness of Matthew's Gospel. But could it be shown to have been published long afterwards, it would still further establish the fact in question: for an appeal to contemporaries some ages after, that the report concerning the soldiers was commonly circulated till *that day* must be an additional evidence of its truth.

The circumstances of our Lord's resurrection, as recorded by the four evangelists, have been long known to involve some difficulty, and to have the appearance of inconsistency: insomuch, that Celsus, in the *second century*, brings this as an objection to the Christian religion. But Mr. P. by confounding things evidently distinct, and using various methods of embarrassing the subject, has given the whole an air of self-contradiction, very suited to impose on the incautious reader: and, as this subject is more likely to embarrass even *a serious inquirer*, than any other in 'The Age of Reason,' I shall endeavour to give a compendious statement of the narrative, as it may be collected by carefully comparing the four evangelists.

Mary Magdalene, the other Mary or Mary the mother of James and Joses, Salome, and Joanna, are the women named in the history: but Luke, having mentioned all the others, except Salome, says, "there "were other women with them." This company on the evening of our Lord's crucifixion, concerted the plan, and bought the spices, for the anointing of his body: and then retiring, probably to separate lodgings, they "rested the sabbath-day, according to

" the commandment." But early on the morning after, they proceeded according to appointment to *meet at the sepulchre;* for there is no mention of their *previous meeting* at any other place: and thus they reached that spot at different times. Mary Magdalene seems to have set out with the other Mary and Salome, from one place; Joanna, and the other women with her, from another. But Mary Magdalene, being peculiarly fervent in spirit, appears to have outgone her companions, and to have arrived first at the sepulchre, *while it was yet dark*, or *day break**; and seeing the stone removed, she ran back to inform Peter. In the mean while, the other Mary and Salome reached the sepulchre, and finding it open, they went in and saw the angel, or angels. Matthew and Mark mention only one angel, because only one spake to the women: but they do not say there was no more than one. Thus Matthew mentions two demoniacs, where Mark and Luke speak of but one; doubtless because that one was most remarkable, both before and after his dispossession. Though possibly Luke spake of Joanna, and her company.—While these women returned into the city, Peter and John seem to have passed them by another road: and coming to the sepulchre they saw no angels†. But Mary Magdalene, who had followed them, and staid at the sepulchre when they returned, saw two angels, and afterwards Christ himself; who directly after appeared to the other Mary and Salome, as they returned to the city‡. In the mean time, Jo-

* John xx. 1, 2.

† John xx. 3—18

‡ Matt. xxviii. 9—11.

anna and her company arrived at the sepulchre *bearing the spices;* for though the other women are said to have *bought the spices;* yet it is probable that Joanna, and those accompanying her, carried them to the place. When therefore they first entered the sepulchre, they only observed that the body was gone: but afterwards two angels appeared and accosted them*. Then they returned into the city in haste, and meeting with the apostles, before the other women had seen them, they informed them of what they had observed; upon which Peter went again to the sepulchre. About this time, the two disciples set out for Emmaus, having heard only the report of these women; and neither that of Mary Magdalene, nor that of the other Mary and Salome†. These at length arriving, informed the apostles that they had seen Jesus himself: and soon after on the same day he appeared to Peter also.

There are other ways of reconciling the *apparent* disagreement between the evangelists, in respect of this transaction: yet none can certainly say, that things occurred exactly in this or the other manner. It suffices to show, that things *might* thus happen, and that the evangelists do not contradict each other. Had the apostles been examined in open court, to prove what Mr. P. calls an *alibi*, I am persuaded the explanations which they could have given of the general narrative, would have removed all appearance of inconsistency, as this arises entirely from the brevity, with which they touched upon the leading circumstances. It may, however, be observed, that the

* Luke xxiv. 1—9. † Luke xxiv. 12—34.

primitive enemies of christianity were as implacable, at least as any are at present; that they were engaged by interest and reputation, as well as inclination, to prove the apostles false witnesses; that they desired exceedingly to put them to death; and that they certainly possessed more advantages for detecting the imposture, if there had been any, than a modern unbeliever can pretend to, after seventeen hundred years: yet they never attempted to disprove the testimony of the apostles respecting the resurrection, or to show that they contradicted each other.

The variations, in the narratives of the evangelists, are in fact no more than what arose from the occasion. Four men, relating the outlines of such an event, with great conciseness as circumstances impressed their minds, without trying to coincide in their several accounts, will always seem to disagree to the superficial observer. Such abstracts must appear in some measure abstruse to strangers, and especially in future ages: but if fuller investigation remove the difficulties, they rather confirm than invalidate the leading facts, which they concur to establish. Let any man consult Rapin, Hume, Burnet, and Macauley upon some parts of the English history, which they have all written: and he will find, even where prejudices have not misled them, that circumstantial variations are discoverable, which require pains to reconcile, and *to form into one consistent narrative, without omitting the most minute particular.*

We do not pretend, that the inspired historians were changed into elegant and methodical writers; but that they were preserved from error, misrepresentation, or material omission. Should their narra-

tives, therefore, not stand the ordeal of criticism, as to the arrangement and manner of composition, it would not at all affect the argument.

Some detached remarks must be added on Mr. P.'s misrepresentations of the subject. The different accounts given by the evangelists, of the *time* when the women arrived at the sepulchre, may be reconciled by considering, that they did not all come together. In general, none reached the spot before *day-break*, none after *sun-rise;* and minute exactness, in such things, is not at all requisite to historical truth.

Matthew alone mentions the angel's rolling away the stone, but all the other evangelists say it was *rolled away:* so that in fact they confirm his testimony. Matthew says, the angel sat *on the stone:* Mr. P. says, that "according to the others, *there was no angel* '*sitting on it**.' According to Matthew, the angel *sat on the stone*, when he appeared to the *keepers* or Roman soldiers; "and for fear of him, they became "as dead men!" But they had so far recovered themselves, as to flee from the place, before any of the women arrived: and the angel or angels then appeared, *not on the stone*, *but in the sepulchre.* As no intimation is given, that any of the women saw the soldiers, on their arrival at the sepulchre; it is almost certain, that they had previously left the place. Matthew indeed seems to state the *report made by some of them to the chief priests*, as subsequent to the women's departure from the sepulchre: but the whole time required for all these transactions, would be very short: and probably the soldiers retired in confusion

* P. ii. p. 74, 75.

to their quarters, and did not at first resume their confidence, or come to any determination what to do; till after a while, some of them went to inform the chief priests, and others dispersed rumours among their acquaintance concerning what had happened. There is not, however, the least ground for Mr. P.'s confident assertion, that they were present, during 'the *conversation* of the women with the angel.'

'Thomas,—as they say, would not believe, without having ocular and manual demonstration; *so neither will I:* and the reason is as good for me, and for every person as for Thomas*!' Most certainly, because it was good for nothing in Thomas; but he was guilty of a most absurd incredulity. He that will not believe the combined testimony of several unexceptionable witnesses, is an obstinate unreasonable skeptic: and, if he carry his principles into temporal concerns, he must cease from business, food, and medicine, and die like a wrong-headed fanatic; because he cannot have ocular or manual demonstration, that he shall not be cheated in all his concerns, or poisoned by his cook or apothecary. In respect of another world, and its infinite concerns, the required proof cannot be had, till it be for ever too late.

Mr. P. introduces the angel as saying of Christ, according to Matthew's account, *behold he is gone into Galilee;* instead of *behold he goeth*, or *is going:* though the same evangelist just after mentions his meeting the women! Matthew indeed says, "Then "the eleven disciples went into Galilee:" but he does not say, that they *went on the day when Christ*

* P. i. p. 9.

arose; how then does he contradict the account of John?

It appears from John, that the apostles staid at least eight days at Jerusalem, after our Lord's resurrection: for it was so long before Thomas was convinced, and owned Christ as his Lord and his God; and this does not at all disagree with Matthew's compendious narrative. But Mr. P. boldly says*, 'it appears *from the evangelists*, that the whole space of 'time, from the crucifixion to what is called the ascension, is but a *few days*, apparently not more *than* 'three or four; and all the circumstances are reported to have happened nearly about the *same spot.*' Either Mr. P. is more ignorant of the writings which he would expose, than any other author ever was of his subject, or else he wilfully asserts what he knows to be false. No man, who reads the evangelists, can help seeing, that much longer time, *than three or four days*, was taken up in these transactions, and that some of them occurred *at the sea of Tiberias in Galilee*, at least sixty or seventy miles distant from Jerusalem. The writer of the Acts of the Apostles, says expressly, that our Lord continued forty days on earth, previously to his ascension; and that the apostles began to preach on the feast of Pentecost, that is, fifty days after Christ's resurrection.

Mr. P. intimates, that our Lord appointed the meeting in Galilee on the very evening of his resurrection: and he says, that 'Luke tells a story (con-'cerning the disciples at Emmaus) 'which totally in-'validates the account of his going to the mountain

* P. ii. p. 8.

'in Galilee.' But does not every attentive and candid man perceive, that the apostles might stay a week, or ten days at Jerusalem, where Christ might repeatedly meet them in a private room: that then they might journey into Galilee, and meet him with numbers of those, who had formerly known him: and that afterwards returning to Jerusalem, they might witness his ascension?

He next objects to the '*skulking* privacy of our 'Lord's appearance, in the *recess* of a mountain, or 'in a *shut-up house* in Jerusalem*.' The preposition, however, which the evangelist uses, in respect of the mountain in Galilee, is exactly the same with which he introduces the sermon on the mount. "He went "up *into a mountain.*"—A situation similar to that, from which he addressed an immense multitude, could not be a *skulking privacy* or the *recess* of a mountain.

The Galileans, among whom our Lord had principally lived, were the most proper witnesses of his resurrection: and it cannot reasonably be questioned, but that on this occasion he was seen of five hundred brethren at once; when, probably by reason of the distance, some *still doubted*, till further evidence convinced them. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were less capable of recognizing his person: yet they saw what may be considered as equivalent, in the descent of the Holy Ghost on the apostles, and the subsequent effects.

Important reasons may be assigned, why a competent number of witnesses should be selected to testify

* P. ii. p. 79.

our Lord's resurrection, while God himself confirmed their testimony by miracles; rather than that he should show himself to the rulers and people of the Jews. Had he done this, and had the scribes, elders, and priests, persisted in rejecting him; the testimony of the apostles would have laboured under many additional disadvantages, among other nations, and with future ages. Had they unanimously embraced the Gospel, the whole would have the appearance of a scheme for aggrandizing the nation. In either case, the evidence to us could not have been at all augmented: for we should have had only the testimony of the individuals who recorded those events; and these would at least have been as liable to objections and cavils, as they now are.

Mr. P. remarks, 'that Paul *only* says, five hundred 'saw Christ at once, and that the five hundred do not 'say it for themselves*.' Was it then to be expected, that these five hundred persons should write as many books, to declare they saw the risen Saviour? If they had, we should have been five hundred times as much perplexed, as we now are, in order to determine whether they were *genuine* or not! But Paul, by appealing to about three hundred living witnesses at once, put it into the power of his enemies to disprove his confident assertion, had it not been true; and as it has never been contradicted, it is equivalent to the testimony of multitudes. Mr. P. however, aware that Paul's testimony is very important, endeavours to set him aside: for he says, 'his 'evidence is like that of a man, who comes into a

* P. ii. p. 73.

' court of justice to swear, that what he hath sworn ' before is false. A man may often see reason, and ' he has always too a right, of changing his opinion ; ' but this liberty does not extend to matters of fact.' A man, it is true, has no *power to change matters of fact ;* but surely he has *liberty to change his opinion concerning them !*

Paul, by crediting the Gospel, which he once hated, *altered his opinion concerning matters of fact :* and when he attested what he had before denied ; he only declared himself convinced, that Jesus was risen, and that christianity was true.

Should Mr. P. thus change his opinion concerning the Gospel, and publicly avow his conviction of its truth ; men of sober mind would think him an unexceptionable witness in the cause : especially, if he fully laid before the world, those arguments by which he had been convinced of his mistake, and unreservedly took shame to himself for his former groundless and violent enmity to the cause of God.

Mr. P. says, ' the story of Jesus Christ appearing ' after he was dead, is the story of an apparition.' If by a *miraculous* power he entered the room, not without *opening the door, but without its being opened for him ;* and if he *disappeared* or ceased to be seen by the disciples, though on other occasions they saw and handled that very body which had been crucified, and those hands and feet, and that side, which had been pierced : what proof do these circumstances afford, that it was an *apparition ?* Must a risen body be subject exactly to the same things, as our dying bodies are ? May not God exert his power as he sees good ? The risen Saviour ate and drank to prove that he

was truly a living man: but this does not prove that he needed meat and drink.—The reality of the apostle's mission, did not at all rest on the Jews seeing Christ ascend; but on the miracles, which they were enabled to work before the people, after the descent of the Holy Ghost: yet the consistent united testimony of eleven unexceptionable witnesses, to words *spoken in a cellar*, or actions done *upon a mountain*, is evidence *in public*, sufficient to prove any thing which is not impossible; but if a man will not believe, till there be no *possibility of denial or dispute*, the light of eternity alone can convince him. There is proof enough of our Lord's ascension to satisfy reason, to satisfy reasonable men: and the only wise God did not ask counsel either of ancient or modern sadducees, what kind and degree of evidence it was proper for him to afford.

Mr. P. alludes on this occasion to the ascent of a balloon*. Now I would ask any reasonable man, whether he doubts the fact of men having ascended into the air by means of a balloon, because he never saw it? The evidence given, that it hath been done, satisfies my mind as completely, as if I had witnessed the scene: and I am as sure of it, as to all practical purposes.

I agree with Mr. P. that it is impossible to *unite inspiration and contradiction*. But I affirm, with confidence equal to *his*, that he has not proved, and that he cannot prove, a single contradiction upon the evangelists.

* P. ii. p. 8.

It is observable, that Mr. P. cannot find any avowed *opposer* of christianity, previous to A. D. 400, who denied the Gospels to be *authentic* histories. The fact is, that Celsus in the second century, Porphyry in the third, and Julian in the fourth, admitted it, and argued against the Christians on other principles.—Mr P. is, therefore, welcome to Faustus as a coadjutor in this undertaking: for he came too late to disprove by mere assertion what both friends and enemies had agreed in, for nearly four hundred years*. Faustus was a Manichean; he contended that Matthew did not write the Gospel which bears his name, because he is always *mentioned in the third person;* and he has been generally treated as a very ignorant, or a very dishonest man for his attempt. Mr. P. is also welcome to all the help that forged Gospels can give him: for *forgery always implies the existence of the thing counterfeited, and commonly its excellency likewise.* And the heretics, who *at the commencement of christianity, rejected as false all the New Testament*, at least, testified that the book *then* existed, and was generally deemed authentic and divine, though they refused to submit to its authority. The inducements indeed to forgery, in the primitive times, were poverty, stripes, contempt, imprisonment, and martyrdom!—Mr. P's sneers at *possessions* may excite the laughter of some readers, but do not at all disprove the facts authenticated by the evangelists. And if the type and the anti-type, the prophecy and its fulfilment actually coincide; as the key and the lock exactly fit together, notwithstanding the greatest

* P. ii. p. 84, 85.

intricacy of wards: the word *picklock* will never convince a rational man, that they were not intended for each other.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

Mr. P. has scarcely said any thing about this book, except that it is *anonymous* and *anecdotal**. But it is in fact an *avowed* appendix to St. Luke's Gospel, and inscribed to the same person. And it is of far more consequence in the argument, than this slight notice seems to intimate: for it certainly gives us a most distinct and probable account of an undeniable fact, which it is impossible by any other means to account for, namely, *the success of christianity, after the crucifixion of its Founder, in opposition to all the authority, learning, and religion of the world: by the labours of a few poor fishermen, and others of equally obscure rank in the community.* Admit this narrative to be true; and the resurrection of Christ, with the divine authority of the Scriptures, is established beyond dispute; deny it; and besides the difficulty of disproving so long received an history, it becomes necessary to give some other probable account of the *early* prevalence of the Gospel, which is rendered indisputable by the testimony even of pagan writers.

The conversion of St. Paul likewise is recorded in this book: which Mr. P. indeed denies to have been miraculous. Does he then mean that the light above the brightness of the sun, the articulate voice calling

* P. ii. p. 23.

to Saul by name and discoursing with him, and the other circumstances of the apostle's narrative, may all be ascribed to a flash of lightning?—The extraordinary change in the conduct and principles of Paul were notorious to all the world: and his own history of the manner in which it took place must be deemed authentic, till it be proved either *false* or *impossible*. He gave sufficient proof, that he did not attempt to impose on others: and the facts which he relates were of such a nature as to exclude the possibility of his being himself deceived: while his subsequent blindness for three days, and the silence of his companions, who would have contradicted his account, had it been false, combine to establish it.

Mr. P. objects to Paul's testimony to christianity, because he was a *zealot;* or in other words, because he spake and acted as a man in earnest: as if no man were an unexceptionable witness, who thoroughly believes his own testimony, and is ready to lay down his life in confirmation of it! The difference between a *fact* and a *doctrine* in this case, is not to the purpose: for admit the *facts*, by which the apostle was convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah; and the *doctrine* which he preached, must be owned to be divine. That Paul had been *extremely* prejudiced and violent against christianity must be allowed; and this rendered his conversion the more wonderful: but he ran into no extremes, in his zeal for the Gospel; at least his vehement zeal was gentle, loving, patient, and prudent, and he seemed disposed to treat no one with severity except himself.

THE EPISTLES OF PAUL.

Mr. P. seems to have very little examined this part of Scripture! for he scarcely notices any particular in it, except the apostle's discourse concerning the resurrection, which he strangely mistakes, or misrepresents.

'If,' says he, 'I have already died in this body, 'and am raised again in the same body, it is pre-'sumptive evidence I shall die again.' This objection entirely coincides with the cavil of the ancient Sadducees, and is answered by our Lord himself.—Certainly this view of a resurrection is gloomy enough: but the apostle's doctrine of "this mortal put-"ting on immortality, and this corruptible putting on "incorruption," has a very different aspect.—Mr. P. says, he should prefer a 'better body, with a more 'convenient form;' and he thinks that every animal has in many respects the advantage of us. I apprehend some deists may so far reverence the Creator, as to deem Mr. P.'s language on this subject reprehensible, and savouring of ingratitude: nay, perhaps they may be disposed to maintain, that the erect structure of the human body best suits the rational nature; and that the astonishing advantages, which our *hands* afford us, give us a decided pre-eminence over all other creatures here below. We have, however, such bodies as it hath pleased God, and we must exist in another world according to his good pleasure, whatever we may *choose* or hope.

Mr. P. next retorts the apostle's words upon him, and repeatedly calls him *a fool!* But had he duly

considered the nature of *death*, which is not *absolutely ceasing to exist*, but *ceasing to exist in the former manner;* he would, as a naturalist, have seen, that except *seeds die*, they are not quickened. "Unless "they *die* they abide alone," as our Lord also says; who is thus involved with the apostle in our author's preremptory charge. The seed, before it grows, ceases as much to be a grain of corn, as a man at death ceases to be a living man; and is as absolutely irrecoverable to its former mode of existence by any human power: yet it springs up into a new life, incomprehensibly, by the power of God, as men will rise at the last day. So that the illustration is sufficiently just and clear; even though *ingenuity* could find out some shades of difference, with which men in general are wholly unacquainted.

The rest of the epistolary writings are passed over by our author, with the same kind of neglect as he showed to the minor prophets; except that he insinuates they were *forged*, and pretends that they are of no consequence in the argument; which will be considered in another place.

I suppose, his wit, in saying, 'the whore of Baby-'lon has been the common whore of all the priests; 'and each has accused the other of keeping the 'strumpet,' is intended as his confutation of the Apocalypse; for, this sally and an assertion, 'that it 'is a book of riddles, which requires a revelation to 'explain it,' is all that he advances concerning this part of Scripture. Yet the numerous predictions it contains, and the undeniable accomplishments which many of them have already received, amount to a

complete moral demonstration that it is the work of God.

Having gone through Mr. P.'s objections to the New Testament; I must declare my complete assurance, that, after all his most confident declamations about contradictions, lies, and impostures, he has not substantiated one single charge. And it would be easy to retort upon him: for the instances of disingenuity, misrepresentation, wilful calumny, or astonishing ignorance of the subject, which might be produced, were that necessary, are exceedingly numerous. And thus I leave the matter to the judgment of the candid and impartial reader.

I shall now proceed in a second Part, to call the reader's attention to several important subjects, which are not peculiar to any part of Scripture, but relate in some measure to the whole of the sacred oracles. In doing this, I mean both to exhibit the great outlines of that positive proof on which I believe the divine inspiration of the Scriptures; and the real nature and tendency of the religion contained in them.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

REVELATION.

'REVELATION, when applied to religion, means 'something communicated *immediately* from God to 'man*.' By this definition Mr. P. begs the question: for if revelation means an *immediate* communication from God to man; then indeed nothing communicated from God to us, by the intervention of other men, whether speaking or writing, can be properly so called. The definition may, however, be admitted, in respect of the *original source* whence all revelation is derived: but if it pleased God, *immediately* to communicate to one man, what he meant him to declare to others in his name, and to *authenticate by proper credentials;* the real, or generally received, sense of the word *revelation* will be preserved, though it be communicated from one man to another, over the whole earth, and to the last ages. The doctrine or

* P. i. p. 5, 6.

precept came originally from God, by *immediate* communication, and was no human discovery or imposition.

Mr. P. allows that God has the power to make such a communication, if he pleases; but thinks it improbable he ever should* : and he is confident that God *cannot* enable the man, who first receives this communication, to authenticate it to any other person, so as to render belief of it a duty! This is a very extraordinary assertion! I am able to send a message or a letter by a servant, or in some other way; and to give *full assurance* to a person at a distance, that it comes from me. I can make my will, and so attest it, that, after my death, all parties concerned shall be entirely satisfied it was *my* act and deed: and yet the omnipotent and eternal God *cannot* send a message or make known his will, by the intervention of any servant or messenger! Is this *reason*, or absurd and daring *presumption?* To support such a system, it was necessary to *assert* that miracles are impossible, and prophecies, impostures and lies; and then to affirm, that we can have no proof but *hearsay* of any supposed revelation! On this ground Mr. P. may stand; provided he can *demonstrate* his principles: but if they be merely *assumed* and *false*, it must sink under him. For if a man comes with the rod of Moses in his hand, as well as with "Thus saith the LORD" in his mouth; the miracles which he performs are the seal of his mission, and his testimony can no longer be called *hearsay and assertion.*

* P. ii. p. 95, 96.

Mr. P. ventures on another definition of *revelation*; and says, 'It is communication of something which 'the person did not know before*.' If so, then every accession to our knowledge, however obtained, might be called a revelation: which surely will not help us to affix right ideas to words. From this vague proposition, our author infers that 'all the historical and 'anecdotal part of the Bible is not within the com-'pass of the word *revelation*, and therefore, is not the 'word of God.' But surely God may reveal past events of which no other information could be obtained. "By faith," and consequently by revelation, "we understand that the worlds were framed by the "word of God†." Whatever traditionary information Moses might receive, concerning the creation, the fall, the deluge, and other events preceding his own time; he might be immediately instructed, and guided by an *infallible superintending inspiration* in recording them. This was needful to enable him entirely to distinguish between truth and error in tradition; to know such things as had not been retained in the memory of mankind; and to form a history fully adequate to the ends proposed. In like manner, a similar superintending influence would be requisite, to preserve the sacred historians from falling into error or misrepresentations, through forgetfulness or prejudice, even in respect of those facts of which they had personal knowledge; and it would be still more necessary, when their information was received from others, either by word or writing. So that the idea of *revelation*, in its more general mean-

* P. i. p. 14. † Heb. xi. 3.

ing, does not suppose the writer to be wholly ignorant of his subject, or to make no use of his knowledge and opportunities: but merely, that the infallible superintending inspiration of the Holy Spirit preserved him from errors and prejudices, and all other causes of misapprehension and falsehood; and immediately communicated such things, as he would otherwise have omitted, through ignorance or forgetfulness.

I am induced to stand on this ground, in respect of *the divine inspiration of every part of the Scriptures:* because the sacred writers, for themselves and for each other, expressly and constantly claim it; so that their writings are together called *the oracles of God.* It is evident, that the Jewish Scriptures, in the days of Christ and his apostles, were nearly if not entirely the same as the Old Testament is at present: yet they are continually quoted in the New Testament, in a peculiar manner, as divine inspiration. And if we allow this to be the historical part of the Old Testament; we can hardly deny it to the writings of the apostles and evangelists, which contain the only account extant in the world of the origin and success of christianity. The apostle Peter ranks the epistles of Paul among the *other Scriptures*;* the sacred writers always speak with authority, as in the name of the Lord; and it will appear that their books have been regarded as the word of God, even from the primitive times. There seems no alternative, between admitting their claim to *inspiration* in the fullest sense, and utterly denying it. If some parts of

* 2 Peter iii. 16.

the Scriptures are inspired, but others not: we want either *another revelation* to enable us to distinguish between the word of God, and the word of man intermixed with it; or else an infallible authority on earth to which we may appeal: and so we must either have recourse to the Pope, who has the title by prescription; or to those learned men, that give up the inspiration of some parts of Scripture in defending that of the rest, and who ought to oblige us by exactly distinguishing between them.

If the whole Scripture be inspired, sober criticism may generally discover the interpolations and variations, which have occured in a lapse of ages; and thus distinguish the word of God from human additions: and if a few passages still remain doubtful, the cause of truth will not be affected. But if the line be not exactly drawn between the infallible word of God, and human opinions or dubious passages; every one who is put to difficulty in maintaining his sentiments, by the authority of Scripture, will evade the argument, by contending that the text in question is not inspired: thus the standard of truth and duty will be rendered entirely vague and uncertain: and it will not be much worth while to contend for the *authenticity* or *genuineness* of these ancient records, if we give up their divine authority, as the infallible rule of our faith and practice.

Mr. P. says, that 'Revelation could not make fic-' tion true.' It might, however, preserve men from writing fictions, and lead them to record all needful truth: and few have occasion to be told, how partial

and delusive most histories are, through the passions and misapprehensions of historians.

He observes in another place*, that 'not only *unchangeableness*, but even the *impossibility of a change* 'taking place, by any means or accident whatever, is 'an idea that must be affixed to what we call the 'the word of God.' Now what it this but asserting without the least proof, that God cannot give a revelation of himself to his creatures? Notwithstanding the imperfections of language, the want of an universal language, the errors of translators, copyists, and printers, &c.: authors make a tolerable shift to communicate their sentiments to mankind, (some of them even to remote ages and nations,) with little hazard of material mistakes: and cannot the Almighty and only wise God do the same?

Though Mr. P. asserts, that translations of revelation can in no degree be depended on; and thence argues against the Bible†: yet he thinks translations may very well answer the purpose, in respect of natural knowledge, which is *his revelation.* 'There is 'now nothing new to be learned from the dead lan-'guages: all the useful books are translated, and the 'time expended in teaching and learning them is 'wasted‡.' But translations may not always be exact, and the knowledge of the original languages is very useful: yet good versions will suffice to afford the unlearned reader a competent knowledge of all that is essential in any book; learned men will give warning to their neighbours, if a palpably false translation be palmed upon them, of any work which interests

* P. i. p. 19. † P. i. p. 26. ‡ P. i. p. 37.

mankind in general; and even the dissentions among Christians in this land evince the fairness of our translation of the Scriptures; for all parties commonly refer to it. In like manner, the contests between Christians and Jews, and the controversies carried on with real or supposed heretics, warrant our confidence that these contending parties so watched over one another, as to prevent all material alterations in those books, to which they agreed in making their appeal.

If any Christians reject *reason* in receiving revelation, they act as absurdly, as if a man should put out his eyes, that he may simply avail himself of the light of the sun; instead of putting out his candle as of no further use. *Reason* should be employed in weighing the evidences, and understanding the meaning, of *revelation:* and *faith* itself, in the common affairs of life, constitutes one important exercise of our rational faculties, by which we derive *information from testimony*, in a variety of cases, with which we could not otherwise be sufficiently acquainted for practical purposes. As far indeed as this exercise of our understanding relates to *the testimony of God in Scripture*, it is so connected with the state of the will and affections, and produces such effects upon our whole conduct: that we, as fallen creatures, are morally incapable of it, without the influences of divine grace; and our vain, fallible *reasonings*, with the conclusions deduced from them, must not be put in competition with the unerring decision of the word of God: nevertheless divine faith is in all respects most reasonable, and one of the highest uses of our rational powers.

Mr. P. seems to consider *false revelations*, as a proof that there is no *true revelation** : but do forged bank-bills prove that no genuine bank-bills exist? Nay, does not common sense deduce the opposite inference? Indeed false revelations could never have obtained credit, if men had not generally deemed a revelation possible, desirable, and even probable. We should then carefully distinguish between the precious and the vile; and not reject all together.

Revelation may be considered as *immediate* to the person who receives it from the Lord; and *mediate* to all that receive it from him to whom it was first communicated. It relates to doctrines, precepts, or facts; and to things past; and present, (in time though invisible to us;) and future, as the day of Judgment and an eternal world. A communication from God of things wholly unknown before, and undiscoverable by other means, is an *entirely new revelation*: but immediate information concerning things in some measure known before, or discoverable in other ways, is a *partial revelation*. When new truths were revealed, new ordinances instituted, and material changes in religion introduced; unequivocal miracles were necessary to authenticate them, and to seal the prophet's mission and prove his authority. But where the messenger, though immediately inspired, was only employed to enforce those truths and precepts which had before been divinely attested, miracles were not absolutely necessary; (though they might be very useful in exciting the attention of the people;) for the appeal might be made to a preced-

* P. i. p. 41.

ing authenticated revelation. No *apparent* miracles can prove the truth of any doctrine, which contradicts the essential principles of a former authenticated revelation: such as JEHOVAH being the one living and true God, the heinousness of idolatry, &c.: but the excellent nature and tendency of a doctrine may be a corroborating evidence of its divine original. These thoughts, however, make way for another subject, which requires a particular consideration.

CHAP. II.

MIRACLES.

MR. P. endeavours to confound *miracles* with *monsters*, *absurdities*, *impossibilities*, or natural uncommon events. 'No one thing,' says he, 'is a greater mira-'cle than another; an elephant not a greater miracle 'than a mite, a mountain than an atom*!' But whoever conceived *any of these creatures* to be *miracles?* The ascension of a balloon, electricity, magnetism, and the recovery of a drowned person, are said 'to 'have every thing in them which constitutes the idea 'of a miracle.' Whereas nothing answers the proper idea of a miracle, which well informed persons can account for, on natural principles; though it may answer the purpose of impostors in deceiving mankind. Will any man affirm that the miracles, said to have been wrought when Moses waved his rod, can be thus accounted for? What *natural* efficacy could fill Egypt with frogs, flies, lice, or locusts, exactly at the time when it was foretold they would come? or turn the waters into blood? or cause thick darkness for three days in the whole land, while Goshen enjoy-

* P. i. p. 56, 57.

ed the light? or destroy in one night all the first-born of man and beast? or divide the sea, for the deliverance of Israel and the destruction of Pharaoh?—Could an artful man impose on the senses of two whole nations, in such matters, as a juggler can deceive a few people in a room? By what natural powers, which philosophy may explain, could Christ give immediate sight to a man born blind, cure inveterate paralytics in a moment, and give *calmness* and rationality to distracted persons, and soundness to withered limbs? How could he restore full health at once to such as languished in fevers, or call the dead out of their graves? Could multitudes be persuaded that they saw these effects, when they saw them not? Could not the rulers, who crucified Jesus, have disproved his pretensions to miracles, if he had not wrought them? Would they and their posterity to this day have imputed them to magic, or similar causes, if they could have denied them? Did not these miracles challenge investigation from the best informed and most inimical persons? Were not time, place, and circumstances particularly mentioned; and the appeal thus made to vast multitudes? What have magnetism, electricity, balloons, or magical deceptions, in common with such miracles? In some cases the *suspended* principle of life may be restored by proper means; yet such humane efforts often prove unsuccessful: but when did Christ or his apostles fail of accomplishing their purpose? If among ten thousand supposed to be dead, one should be merely in the state of a strangled man; who could certainly know that one from all the rest, as carried forth to be buried, or as laid in the grave.

And should any person now go forth, in the presence of assembled multitudes, and say, "Young man "arise," "Lazarus come forth;" would not his pretensions be soon exposed?

'The lameness of the doctrine, which needs a mi-'racle to prove it*,' means its contrariety to our false notions and corrupt affections; and it implies, that we should not have discovered it without revelation. The argument, therefore, stands thus: 'Every doc-'trine is *lame*, that we cannot know without revela-'tion, or are not disposed to receive: so that revela-'tion is needless and useless: miracles are only need-'ful to support revelation; therefore, all miracles are 'imposture; and cannot authenticate revelation:' And thus our reasoner completely argues in a circle!

Miracles confirming important truth and giving authority to divine injunctions, answer far other purposes, than 'to make people stare and wonder.' They do not stand on the testimony of a *single* reporter, as if *Mr. P. should tell us he wrought a miracle in his study;* but on the testimony of hundreds and thousands of witnesses.—Who would have believed Lunardi, if he had told us, that he had ascended into the air in the deserts of Arabia; when no such event had ever *here* been witnessed? But as he ascended before ten thousand spectators, what reasonable man can doubt it? Or who in future ages will dispute the veracity of the authors who record it? The dilemma, is therefore, not, whether it be more 'probable 'that nature should go out of her course, or *a man 'tell a lie:*' but whether it be more probable, that

* P. i. p. 58.

God, for wise reasons, should suspend or alter the course of nature, on some important occasions; or that ten thousands of witnesses should be deceived in the most evident facts, or combine together to deceive the world. And would not any one be ridiculed, who should gravely say, 'It is more probable ' that a man should lie, than that people should mount ' into the air?' This I think is a fair statement of the evidence concerning balloons.

' It would have approached nearer to the idea of a ' miracle, if Jonah had swallowed the whale: this ' may serve for all cases of miracles*.' This may indeed serve for a specimen of Mr. P-'s logic and candour. If a miracle be 'an *impossibility attested by a* ' *single witness*,' his arguing against all miracles is conclusive. Indeed he speaks of miracles as things *naturally incredible*†: and in several places seems disposed to retail Mr. Hume's famous sophism, that ' mi- ' racles are contrary to universal experience;' which means neither more nor less than *the experience of all who never saw them!* The African prince, who called the Europeans liars, when they told him they had seen rivers and seas congealed by frost as hard as a stone, was of the same *reasonable* disposition. This was contrary to the universal experience of all those who inhabited the torrid zone; and it was more probable men should lie, than that things naturally incredible should be true!—But in fact, miracles must be extraordinary events, to answer the end proposed by them: and if they became so common, that every body had seen or observed them; we

* P. i. p. 69. † P. ii. p. 4.

should be ready to think them the effect of some unknown natural causes, instead of a divine interposition.

Mr. P. says, 'the most extraordinary of all the 'things called miracles, is that of the devil flying 'away with Jesus Christ*.' The New Testament relates no transaction of this nature: we are there only told, that "the devil took Jesus to the holy "city," "and to the mountain:" and that "he "brought him to Jerusalem;" which does not imply, that he was carried through the air, or went without his own free consent, or that it was properly speaking miraculous. So that in this, as in other instances, Mr. P.'s profane ridicule falls on his own absurd interpretation of Scripture.

Revelation has been shown to be *possible;* and it will hereafter be proved *needful.* The God of goodness and mercy purposes, as we suppose, to make known to mankind his perfections, truth, and will; and to show them, in what manner he is pleased to be approached and worshipped. He therefore communicates these things to an individual, and orders him to inform others concerning them. But the prophet may on such an occasion say, 'How shall it be 'known that the Lord hath sent me? The things to be 'declared are contrary to men's notions and practi-'ces; the world is full of impositions; how shall I be 'distinguished from a deceiver?' Now does it not occur to every reasonable man, that miracles, which could endure the strictest examination, wrought in the presence of multitudes, and frequently repeated

* P. i. p. 59.

or varied, would distinguish the true prophet from all pretenders to inspiration, who either wrought no miracles, or such only as were ambiguous and shrunk from investigation? If it be not unsuitable to God to give a revelation to his creatures; it cannot be either improper or impossible for him to affix such a seal to the instructions of his messengers as can neither be denied nor counterfeited, without exposing to shame the man who attempts it. To raise the dead is as easy to omnipotence, as to preserve the living; to restore the withered arm, as to wither the healthy one; and to cure instantaneously the paralytic after thirty-eight years, as to send a stroke of the palsy. The glory of God and the benefit of mankind are the ends proposed; the means are obvious. All things may be alike *wonderful* to us; but all are not alike *miracles:* for miracles are effects produced beyond the powers of man, and contrary to the ordinary course of nature: and when well authenticated they are equally credible with other events; provided it appear also that some important end was intended, and some great effects were produced by them. In this view, how different do the miracles of Scripture appear, from the *insulated*, *ambiguous*, *uncertain*, and *useless* miracles, pretended to have been wrought by Vespasian, or in favour of Alexander's army! Though Mr. P. says, these are quite as well authenticated as the Bible-miracles*!

If the miracles ascribed to Moses, or to Jesus Christ and his apostles, were actually performed; it must be allowed, that they were the work of omnipotence,

* P. ii. p. 5.

and can no otherwise be accounted for. It would also have been impossible to have forged such stories of public miracles, so circumstantially related, and to have given them currency among contemporaries. Whole nations, especially of enemies, cannot thus be deprived of their senses, or inhibited the use of them. It would have been equally impossible to have persuaded the next generation, that their fathers had told them of these wonders from their infancy, and that they had seen and heard them; if they had never been told such stories by their fathers. And at what time could the belief have been received either by Jews or Christians, that these *miracles had always been credited among them*, had there been no truth in them? The attempt to convince whole nations, or large bodies of people, that from time immemorial such things had been generally known and assuredly believed; and that they had observed certain festivals and institutions in commemoration of them, and were subject to laws and ordinances given at the same time; if the whole had been a forgery, must have been deemed an insult on the common sense of mankind.

The fables, which have obtained credit in different nations, had always some foundation in truth, however distorted. They never specify the *precise time, place, and manner*, in which things happened: and they do not appeal to numerous living witnesses, and challenge investigation. The poets of Greece and Rome did not pretend, that they were eye-witnesses of the stories, with which they embellished their works. Homer and Hesiod vamped up fabulous traditions current among the Greeks: but they did not

declare, that the whole nation, yea, and rival nations also, saw those things; and that they wrote their account *at the time* and *upon the spot*. This could never have obtained credit, even in those days. But can any man conceive, that it would now be possible to invent a history of the remote times of this nation; and to persuade mankind, that it had always been as commonly known among us, as the books of Moses are among the Jews, or the New Testament among Christians? And would it not be equally impossible to introduce such an history with *this kind of appeal*, at any future time, had it never before been published?

In order to illustrate the subject, let us consider the single miracle of our Lord's resurrection.—His ignominious death and subsequent glory are evidently predicted in the Old Testament; and his enemies knew, that he had foretold his own resurrection on the third day, and took their measures accordingly. On the third day the body was gone, and they could give no rational account of its removal. Twelve men, of good character and sober understanding, such as any court of justice would allow to be unexceptionable witnesses, constantly affirmed that they saw Jesus after his resurrection, and examined his hands, feet, and side; that they had long known him, and were sure it was he; that they had repeated opportunities of conversing with him, and renewed assurances that they beheld the identical body again alive, which had been nailed to the cross; and at length that they saw him ascend towards heaven. In this testimony they persisted till death, without one of them deviating from it. In support of their testimony, they renounced every interest

and faced all kinds of dangers and sufferings imaginable; till most of them sealed it with their blood. In all other respects, they were most virtuous and holy characters: and their doctrine is so strict, that according to it, a forgery of this kind, however well intended, will, unless repented of, ensure a man's eternal damnation. A great number of other witnesses confirmed their testimony; and the silence of their enemies, whose credit, authority, and even safety, were deeply concerned, tends to establish it. In authentic history, we are told, that they wrought divers miracles, and communicated similar powers to others, in support of their evidence; and that thus God himself attested it. In the epistles written by them to the churches, they speak of these miraculous powers, as things well known, without fear of being disproved. Their success, in opposition to all the power, learning, genius, and religion in the world, merely by preaching a crucified and risen Saviour, confirms these claims and the event they testified: and the existence and effects of christianity for nearly eighteen hundred years, combine with all the foregoing proofs, to authenticate the miracle of Christ's resurrection.

If that event had not actually taken place, how could such multitudes, prejudiced in various ways against the Gospel, have been induced to embrace it? How came they, who continued enemies, to submit silently to the charge of having murdered the Prince of life? Or how was christianity established in the world? No fact was ever so fully confirmed as this, by multiplied and varied testimony: and by permanent, extensive, and most important conse-

quences. Even the Jews have not denied the miracles of Christ and his apostles, however perplexed to account for them: yet each miracle was equal, at least, to an unexceptionable witness of the resurrection, and consequently to the truth of christianity. This may also answer Mr. P.'s objection to the testimony of the Jews. I suppose no man ever thought of bringing them forward as *direct voluntary* witnesses to the truth of the Gospel: but they indisputably confirm the antiquity of the Old Testament, and the reverence with which it hath been regarded by their nation for at least five hundred years before Christ; they establish all the facts that relate to him, except his resurrection; and their present condition, fulfils the predictions both of the Old and New Testament. But to say, that the Jews are the best evidence '*concerning the truth of the Gospel**;' is to affirm, in other words, that none but enemies should be admitted as witnesses; and that when any of them are convinced and become Christians, their testimony is thenceforth inadmissible.

* P. i. p. 9.

CHAP. III.

PROPHECY.

MR. P. would persuade us, that the prophets were merely *poets*, or *musicians*, who made no pretensions to inspiration or prediction; and that the Christian theologists have advanced them to their present rank*! This he endeavours to prove, by observing that there is not a word in the Bible which signifies a *poet*.'—Certainly there is in the New Testament†; but if there were not, what would this be to the purpose? There is no word in the Bible for a metaphysician; *ergo* a prophet signifies a metaphysician!—But he says that the prophets wrote in verse! This they did frequently: yet they sometimes wrote in prose. Occasionally they played also on musical instruments. What then? Did none except prophets write poetry, and use music and psalmody? Did they all do these things? The New Testament prophets are not recorded to have used either music or poetry. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are expressly and repeatedly called *prophets*‡; though Mr. P. denies it: and says,

* P. i. p. 17. 19. 60, 61. P. ii. p. 54, 55. † Acts xvii. 28.
‡ Gen. xx. 7. Ps. cv. 9—15.

'it does not appear that they could either sing, play 'music, or make poetry.' But whatever were the original idea of a *prophet* or *prophesying*, who but Mr. P. would have confidently asserted the meaning at present annexed to those words to be a *modern* invention? What! did not the ancient Jews expect a Messiah according to the prophets?—Yet he allows that 'the profession of a SEER: the art of seeing, a vi-'sionary insight into things concealed, became incor-'porated into the word prophet, at the time when Saul 'banished the wizards*!' Who can help noting with admiration this writer's consistency?

The words *poet* and *prophet* are in pagan writers in some respects synonymous: because the pagans ascribed poetic raptures to inspiration. Thus the poet was exalted into a prophet, not the prophet degraded into a versifier and musician: And I am confident the sober student of the Bible will find very few passages, in which the idea of a divine impulse, in one way or other, is not evidently connected with the words *prophet* or *prophesying*; except where false prophets are evidently intended.

The moral character of the *man* was not *essential* to the prophetical office. Balaam was a vile wretch; yet his predictions have been wonderfully accomplished: and many such prophets will be detected at the day of judgment. The *evil spirit* from God did not come on Saul, *when he joined the prophets*; but "the Spirit of God came upon him and he prophesied†." But when the spirit of the Lord departed

* P. ii. p. 55. † 1 Sam. x. 6—12. xix. 20—24.

from him, an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him* : and then indeed he acted *very ill;* for perhaps mimicking the agitations of the prophets when under divine impulses, he was instigated by Satan to attempt the murder of David.

A *prophet*, in Scripture, does not always denote one that predicts future events: but it means in most places a man supernaturally instructed or directed by the Lord; except when false prophets, the counterfeits of the true, are spoken of. The argument concerning prediction does not, however, depend on the meaning of a word: it must be decided by facts.—Did not the ancient prophets foretel a variety of circumstances concerning the promised Messiah, which were exactly fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth? Did they not mark out the line whence he would spring, the place of his birth, the miracles which he would perform, the usage which he would experience, the sufferings which he would endure, his conduct under them, with that of the Jews and soldiers; his death, burial, and resurrection, and the subsequent prevalence of his cause? If this be undeniable; how absurd it is to pretend, that moderns have falsely dignified Jewish poets and musicians with the title of prophets!

Were not the predictions of the Old Testament exactly descriptive of the events, which have since taken place, respecting Egypt, Tyre, Nineveh, Babylon, Jerusalem, and the Jewish nation? Does not the New Testament contain predictions of "Jerusalem "trodden under foot of the Gentiles;" "the Jews

* 1 Sam. xvi. 14, 15. xviii. 10.

'' scattered through all nations;" and the superstitions, idolatries, usurpations, and persecutions of that church, which hath forbidden to marry, and commanded to abstain from meat, hath enjoined the worship of angels, and been drunken with the blood of Christians? Were these predictions unmeaning words, or random conjectures?—Even the Romans, from a slight acquaintance with the Jewish Scriptures, had concluded that some wonderful person was about to arise in the world, when Christ was born, as Virgil's eclogue called *Pollio*, and the famed sybilline books undeniably prove.

' Nothing seems more suited to convince a *sensible but hesitating inquirer* concerning the truth of revelation, than a careful comparison of' the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy ' with the actual history of the Jewish nation to the present day. This ' appears capable of effecting every thing that any ' external evidence imaginable can effect; and the ' demonstration thence deduced, which may be continually re-examined, at leisure and with deliberation, seems more convincing than any miracles, ' which are *transient acts*, and can only be reviewed ' in the testimony by which they are authenticated*.'

I have not entered particularly on the subject of *types;* because I would not rest the argument of the divine inspiration of Scripture on that ground, but on things more obvious: otherwise, to a considerate mind a very wonderful confirmation of the truth may be derived from them, as well as an illustration of it. But I would here further observe, that there is not a

* Family Bible.

single instance throughout the Scripture, in which any intimation is given, that "it repented the LORD," when a *remote prophecy* was spoken of, for this expression always relates to threatening messages, when averted by reformation, or in answer to the prayers of the prophet. So that 'the Bible makes no fool' of any man; but tells him plainly what to expect in all possible cases.

If revelation were impossible, or could not be communicated; prophecy would indeed be *useless*. But if it ever pleased God to reveal himself to mankind; as miracles were more suited to impress that generation to whom the prophets were sent; so predictions evidently accomplishing from age to age, while new predictions were still given, must be the most conclusive proof to remote generations. And did the limits of this work admit of it, the predictions, interwoven with all the separate divisions of the Scripture, might be shown to demonstrate them severally, as well as collectively, to be the word of God. But I shall only add, that, if Mr. P. and his disciples desire to know further the use of prophecy, let this answer suffice: it enables us to show, that the scoffs and reproaches of infidels were predicted by the sacred writers: that the very abuses of christianity, which they deem unanswerable objections to its divine original, are in every instance a fulfilment of the Scriptures; "thus "it was written, and thus it must be:" and that in this respect, prophecy enables us to cut off Goliath's head with his own sword.

CHAP. IV.

THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE VOTED FOR.

MR. P. says, 'They decided by vote, which of the 'books—should be the word of God, and which 'should not.' 'Those books which had the majority 'of votes, were voted to be the word of God. Had 'they voted otherwise, all the people, since calling 'themselves Christians, had believed otherwise.' 'Who the people were that did all this, we know no-'thing of: they called themselves—the church: and 'this is all we know of the matter*.' But surely a man ought to know much more of the *time*, *place*, and *manner*, in which such an important transaction occurred, than this *ambiguous* statement contains, before he is authorized to infer any thing from it! And *some proof* is requisite to convince thinking men, that all Christians have hitherto in every succeeding age taken their faith upon trust, according to this representation. Pious persons indeed have, *privately* and *collectively*, bestowed great pains, during a succession of ages, to distinguish such books, as have internal and external evidence of authenticity and divine inspiration, from

* P. i. p. 13.

impostures and writings of doubtful authority: and, before our time, this matter had been so thoroughly investigated, that the most competent judges deem it not dangerous to coincide in opinion with those that have gone before them; though not without inquiry, and some trivial difference of sentiment. The Old Testament evidently stood a considerable time before Christ, nearly as we now have it. The Greek, Syriack, and Samaritan versions prove this. Our Lord and his disciples quoted the books now received, and the writers of the New Testament generally use the Septuagint. It is commonly believed, on the authority of ancient Jewish writers, that Ezra, a learned scribe in the law, with some very able associates, bestowed much labour in distinguishing the authentic books of Scripture from such as were spurious, and thus formed the canon of the Old Testament. And the more the subject is examined, the greater satisfaction will every candid person feel, in acquiescing in their determination. For all the books we now have, harmonize with each other, and with the New Testament, in the grand outlines of religion, and indeed even in more minute particulars when well understood: but the apocryphal books often advance anti-scriptural doctrines, and relate most frivolous and romantic adventures. Every thing in the received Scriptures coincides, in respect of dates, customs, the manners of the times, and historical transactions, with the most authentic records of antiquity: but anachronism, confusion, and inconsistency abound in the Apocrypha.

The canon of the New Testament fluctuated for a long time: but the diversity of opinion related only

to a few books; and full *discussion* and *investigation*, not *mere vote*, at length determined the Christians to receive them as they now stand; while others were rejected as spurious for *the most substantial reasons*. This surely proves, that great caution was used to prevent all imposition. No reasonable man can doubt but the Christians, who lived in the primitive times, had many advantages in determining this point; and their opinion is, therefore, entitled to great deference: but learned men are capable of reviewing the subject, and judging of the grounds on which they decided.

It is *certainly known*, that the greatest part of the books now constituting the New Testament were quoted by the most ancient Christian writers; and in a manner which shows they derived their instructions from them, and appealed to them as *of divine authority*, and thus to be distinguished from all other books which had been published among them. A vast proportion of the New Testament might be recovered from writers, who lived within the two first centuries. They formed catalogues of the books, and wrote comments on them. Both the orthodox and the heretics made their appeal to them. Lectures on several parts of them are still extant. Nay the enemies of christianity uniformly mention them, as the authentic books of Christians; while they oppose their contents. So that there is the fullest proof that all the twenty-seven books now collected in the New Testament were received, and read in the assemblies of Christians in the second century; except the epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle of James, the second Epistle of Peter, the second and third of John; that of Jude, and the Revelation of John; and that most

of these, if not all, were extant and well known, though not generally received as divinely inspired.

What then did Mr. P. mean by roundly asserting, 'that there was no such book as the New Testament 'till more than three hundred years after Christ?' This appears at first sight one of the most daring falsehoods that ever was ventured upon: but in fact it is a *mere quibble*, though too evidently intended to deceive. Because if you prove separately every book to have existed, and all but one to have been received as the word of God: still the New Testament did not exist as a book and as it now stands. This is the only way, I confidently affirm, in which Mr. P. can exculpate himself from the charge of direct falsehood: and this is not a very creditable way of opposing other men whom he reviles as liars and impostors.

Who doubts the authenticity of other ancient books, because the original manuscripts are not forth coming? Who could distinguish them from other ancient manuscripts if they were? He, who demands a kind of proof, which the nature of the cause renders *impossible*, is determined that no *possible* evidence shall convince him*.

If these books had not from the first been received as genuine; they could never afterwards have obtained that character, much less have acquired the title of the word of God: for that jealous and scrupulous investigation, which Mr. P. degrades under the idea of *voting*, proves the impossibility of a forgery escaping detection, and being received as a divine revelation.

* P. ii. p. 89.

Had the books, which bear the name of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, or Peter, been published after their death, when they had never before been heard of, would not the several persons and churches, to which some of them were addressed; and Christians in general, as supposed to have been acquainted with them during the lives of the apostles and evangelists, have declared them to be forgeries? The claim it is evident, would have been absurd, and the imposture manifest. The doubts that arose concerning the Epistle to the Hebrews, which bears not the name of Paul; that of James, which perhaps was *then* thought, as it has *since* been, irreconcileable with Paul's doctrine; the second Epistle of Peter, which seems to have been written just before his death; and the second and third of John, in which he only calls himself the Elder, prove this. Some of these books, and perhaps the Revelation of John, might not be generally known among Christians, during the life-time of their authors, or they might not be publicly acknowledged by them: and, therefore, after their death, the scrupulous caution of the church long hesitated about admitting them as genuine and divine; till *internal evidence* fully convinced the most accurate judges, that they were entitled to that regard.

At what time, and in what manner, then could it be possible to fabricate the apostolical epistles, and gain them credit as well known and received from the days of their writers? and how could histories and epistles be forged, so exactly to tally together in the most minute circumstances, without the least appearance of design? If ever books had internal

marks of being *genuine*, which no rational man on diligent perusal can doubt; the Acts of the Apostles, and St. Paul's epistles have those marks: and I believe it would be impossible, for all the genius of all the knaves on earth combined together, to write an history, and a number of epistles, so manifestly open, frank, artless, and often immethodical; and yet to make the one so perfectly to confirm the other. If the priests and rulers of the church should have attempted such an imposition, would the people have unanimously consented to the fraud? And would Jews, Pagans, and Heretics have allowed the forgeries of Christians to be genuine and ancient books? A very probable story indeed is devised by our Oracle of Reason, when he supposes, that the very church which held purgatory, dispensation, and other antichristian tenets, fabricated the epistles which predict and condemn those abuses! But 'the church 'could write, and therefore could fabricate them!' Let Mr. P. or his friends try to fabricate some epistles, and ascribe them to Luther, Calvin, Beza, Cranmer, or some of the reformers; and even allowing them the *immense advantage of saying, they were never before published*, they will soon find it much easier to *write*, than to *establish a literary forgery!*

The resurrection of Christ has been proved; and the apostles shown to have been faithful witnesses. Two of the gospels were written by them, and have evidently been extant from their days; as all competent judges must allow: and the other two gospels were written by the companions of the apostles.—These were published when the facts were recent; and no enemy, for nearly four hundred years after-

wards attempted to *disprove* them. The miracles wrought by the apostles and evangelists, confirmed the truth of the narrative. In these books the words of Christ are contained; and they authenticate all the rest of the Scripture*. We have seen, that he always quoted every part of the Old Testament as the word of God; and he gave *his apostles* the keys of the kingdom of heaven, that whatever they bound or loosed on earth, should be bound or loosed in heaven. This could only be done by their *doctrine;* and all human censures and absolutions are valid, so far as they agree with the doctrine of the apostles, and no further. But where shall we find this doctrine except in their writings? Those writings contain, also, internal proof, both of being genuine and divine; and are confirmed to us by prophecies, which have been fulfilling ever since. Whatever men may now say of the sacred writers, they always speak of themselves and each other, as declaring the truth of God to mankind, and they demand credit and obedience as the messengers and ambassadors of Christ. On every account, therefore, we have good reason, independently of *ancient opinion*, to receive the whole Scripture as the infallible word of God. But 'Christ did 'not write his own life†.' What then? If he had, would not its authenticity or genuineness have been as liable to be questioned, as Matthew's or John's

* Our Lord says, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have be-"lieved me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not *his wri-*"*tings*, how shall ye believe my words?" (John v. 46, 47.) Does not this decide that the books of Moses are *genuine*, with all that believe the testimony of Christ?

† P. i. p. 8.

life of him? This again leads to universal skepticism, and is replete with most arrogant presumption.

Upon the whole, there is not a religion in the world at this day, except christianity, that so much as pretends to be a revelation from God, demonstrated by miracles and prophecies; and rendered successful by a divine power accompanying unarmed unlettered men, preaching a holy doctrine, in the midst of potent and violent enemies, and patiently enduring all sufferings, even to death in the cause. The Jews adhere to the Old Testament; but that evidently foretels and terminates in the New. Mahomet, respecting whom Mr. P. has spoken with great incorrectness, propagated even his licentious religion by the sword, and with many advantages had very little success, till he adopted that measure: and there are no other candidates, which even Mr. P. thought worthy to be mentioned. What hath, therefore, been discoursed, concerning revelation, miracles, prophecy, and the canon of Scripture, contains such a mass of evidence in proof of christianity, as never was, nor can pretend to be, equalled by the advocates for any other religion in the world.

CHAP. V.

MYSTERY.

MR. P. allows, 'in one sense, that every thing is a 'mystery to us:—that we, however, know as much 'as is necessary for us;—and that it is better the Cre- 'ator should perform all for us, than that we should 'be let into the secret.' Yet he calls 'mystery the an- 'tagonist of truth,'—'a fog of human invention that 'obscures truth, and represents it in distortion*.'— 'To believe there is a God may be *easy*, or *necessa- 'ry*;' though atheists would dispute that point: but to know the nature and perfections of God is another matter. The pagan philosopher, who averred 'that 'the more he thought of the Deity, the less he seem- 'ed to know concerning him,' spake far more reasonably on this subject than modern deists. The religion, that has any connexion with an infinite and incomprehensible God and a boundless eternity, must be in many respects mysterious: unless a *finite* mind can fully understand *infinity*. But Mr. P. repeatedly calls *ethics*, *religion;* and says, '*religious duties* con- 'sist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavour- 'ing to make our fellow-creatures happy†.' Now an atheist may do all this: and is not that a singular

* P. i. p. 54, 55. † P. i. p. 4.

definition of *religious duties*, which admits atheists to have been very exemplary in them? No doubt such a religion may be as free from mystery, as any thing in the world can be.

But mystery, in Scripture, signifies something relative to God, and his dealings with us, which could not have been discovered if it had not been revealed; which can only be received by crediting revelation; which can be known no further than God has seen good to discover it; and which is so connected with things unrevealed and incomprehensible, that it cannot be fully understood or explained. The believer therefore *understands the mystery as far as it is revealed*, provided he fully credit the whole divine testimony: but a great deal respecting it still continues undiscovered. He knows it not by reasoning, but by believing; he is still greatly in the dark, and must wait for fuller light till the Lord see good to afford it. In this sense religion must be mysterious; and even Mr. P.'s *revelation*, that is the *external world*, is by his own confession almost as mysterious as the Bible. For on that subject he does not confound *mystery* with *contradiction and absurdity*.

The Scriptures plainly ascribe divine perfections and operations, to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; and use the strongest language of *personality* respecting each of them, even in plain commands and promises: and as there can be but one infinite and eternal God, we infer, that He is revealed as subsisting in three Persons; being Three in one sense, and One in another. But *how these things are*, we cannot comprehend, and should not attempt to explain, further than the oracles of God have

done it. The *doctrine* is an article of faith; the *modus* is not. We do not say that one is three, or three one, which is a contradiction: but as man consists of a material body, an animal life, and a rational soul; and is thus threefold in some sense, though strictly one individual: so the Deity is One in essence; but in some mysterious manner is Triune. This allusion is not meant as an *illustration* of the subject, for it cannot be illustrated; but it shows that there is no contradiction in saying that the same Being may be threefold in one sense, and one in another.

A Trinity of *gods* would certainly weaken the belief of one God; but a Trinity of *persons* in the Deity cannot have this effect. Rather it helps and directs the confidence of the believer in the Father's mercy, through the mediation of the Son, and by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit*.

The Deity of Christ is another view of this mystery: and Mr. P.'s testimony to this doctrine, as certainly contained in Scripture, is not unworthy attention; though his representation of it be distorted and erroneous. Even Voltaire would scarcely honour with his *hatred* such professed Christians as denied it. Many other mysteries might be considered; but these alone need be mentioned in this place.

* P. ii. p. 101, 102.

CHAP. VI.

REDEMPTION.

MR. P's objections to *redemption by the blood of Christ*, constitute a plain proof that no man can help seeing this doctrine in Scripture, if he have not some previous bias on his mind respecting it.

Unless we understand the moral character of God, and the perfect holiness required by his righteous law, and are convinced of our own sinfulness and desert of wrath and condemnation; and unless we allow that "the world lieth in wickedness," and perceive the utter insufficiency of all that we or any other men can do to remedy the numberless evils which fill the earth: it is impossible we can receive, in a proper manner, the *scriptural doctrine of redemption.* But when these things are clearly discerned, and a correspondent disposition of heart is produced: the whole appears to be the plan of infinite wisdom, to display the honour of the divine law, justice, and holiness, in showing mercy to the vilest transgressors. The Lord, in this wonderful manner, most emphatically shows his hatred of sin and his judgment of its

desert; while he pardons and saves sinners: and thus he makes way for producing in our hearts deep humiliation, dread and hatred of sin, cheering hope of mercy, and lively love and gratitude, in entire harmony. At the same time, all intelligent beings in the universe, how many soever there are or may hereafter be, will to eternal ages learn from this subject the whole character of God; and receive such instructions concerning his harmonious perfections, as must prove a vast accession to their felicity, and redound exceedingly to his glory.

With these sublime thoughts before us, to what do Mr. P.'s objections amount? Would Satan's exhibiting himself on a cross, in the shape of a serpent, as a punishment for tempting our first parents, have displayed the evil of *our* sins, the justice of God in condemning the wicked, and his mercy in saving believers? Would it have answered one single end, for which the Scriptures inform us the Son of God was manifested*? And in what respect does Satan now triumph; when by the death of Christ his kingdom is subverted, his cause ruined, and his eternal shame and misery increased? The whole of Mr. P.'s argument on this head implies the supposition, that sin does not deserve punishment, that man is not a sinner, or that it is not proper God should regard the glory of his justice and holiness in showing mercy.—The shocking charge of *suicide* brought against Christ, if he willingly died for our sins, would at least equally fall on every one, who determined to die rather than deny the truth, betray a good cause

* P. i. p. 12, 13.

or desert his friends and country.—The bounty of Providence ought indeed to awaken our gratitude; but unless conscious of our unworthiness, we are not apt to be very thankful; and if we know ourselves, we shall not be animated to *cheerful gratitude*, till confidence of forgiveness and salvation be inspired.

Did we think ourselves so *good*, as to be *worthy* that the Son of God should come and die for us, we should be justly chargeable with *gloomy pride;* but all true believers admire the love of God in this great transaction, *because they know themselves unworthy of the least of his mercies.*

To suffer, though sinless and in the vigour of manhood, as a condemned person, numbered with malefactors, by an ignominious and torturing execution, in the manner marked as *accursed* in the Old Testament, was far more suited to the idea of an *atoning sacrifice*, than any kind of natural death could have been. The pain and shame of crucifixion, with the anguish of spirit expressed by Christ in the garden and on the cross, far better illustrated the wrath of God he endured for us, and which we must otherwise have borne for ourselves to eternity, than the common circumstances of death could have done. Being perfectly holy, he was incapable of remorse and stings of conscience; with firm expectation of the joy set before him, he was not liable to despair; and his divine nature, giving infinite value to his temporary sufferings, rendered eternal duration needless. In all other respects, it behooved him as our Surety to suffer all that *our* sins deserved, and not merely the punishment due to Adam's first transgression.

If men have abused the doctrine of the cross, and deduced a corrupt theory of human merits from it*, we should learn to distinguish truth from falsehood, and not reject both together. It is absurd to suppose *one sinner can merit for another:* but not, that a holy and glorious person should submit to do and suffer many things for sinners, whose nature he had assumed, in order that it might be honourable to God, for his sake and through his intercession, to show mercy to them. Did no prince ever favour a subject, who was obnoxious to punishment, for the sake of some near relation, who had performed great services and interposed in his behalf?

The idea of pecuniary redemption is a scriptural illustration of the atonement. No mere creature is master of his own life; no man can be found who has not forfeited it by his own sins: otherwise, he might as justly suffer pain and death, as reduce himself to poverty, by answering for another person; provided he were perfectly free in undertaking such an engagement, and the ends of justice could be answered by it. *Moral justice* is ambiguous; but *distributive justice* may and does take the innocent for the guilty, whenever the bondsman is arrested for the debt of the principal; and though it does not extend to death, it can only be thence inferred, that this is deemed inexpedient in human society. If an innocent man should suffer the loss of a shilling, or a day's liberty, for the fault of another, without *his own voluntary engagement*, it would be injustice or indiscriminate revenge, as *really*, though not in the *same degree*, as if he

* P. i. p. 23.

were put to death: and it would be extremely difficult to a casuist in such cases to draw the line; and, supposing a previous engagement, to show exactly where justice ended and indiscriminate revenge began.

We suppose Christ to have been a divine person, "God manifest in the flesh;" and that he voluntarily engaged to magnify the law, and satisfy divine justice, in the stead and for the sake of his people, fully knowing the whole case. Having in our nature been perfectly obedient to the law, and not having forfeited his life by one failure: he had in all respects that right to dispose of it as he pleased, which no other man ever had or can have. The ends of the divine government were completely answered by his death upon the cross: and he most freely laid down his life for us, having power to take it again; in order by his *temporal sufferings* to save an innumerable multitude from *eternal* misery, to the everlasting glory of God. In the fulfilment of this plan, what injustice was done? Indeed the charge is wholly grounded on the false supposition, that Christ was *substituted in our place, without his own free consent**.

After all, Mr. P.'s objections principally arise, (as every other person's do,) from this doctrine's 'represent' ing man as an outlaw an outcast, a beggar, a 'mumper,' &c.; he should have said at once *an hell-deserving sinner*. No man will ever cordially acquiesce in the doctrine, with a proper view of it, till he come in that character for salvation. Then his life will neither be spent in grief, nor the affectation of it: but he will rejoice in Christ Jesus, and both relish the

* P. i. p. 24, 25.

comforts, and be supported under the trials, of life, far better than any other person. That doctrine, which to unbelievers appears so *gloomy*, will brighten every prospect, and fill his heart with joy and hope, and his tongue with thankful praises. That opaque cloud, which Mr. P. says the 'person of Christ places 'between the understanding and the deity*;' appears to the believer a glorious display of the divine perfections, in a manner and through a *medium* suited to his feeble conceptions, and relieving to his guilty conscience: so that "beholding as in a glass the "glory of the Lord," (in the face or person of Christ,) "he is changed into the same image from glory to "glory, by the Spirit of the Lord†."

Others of us, as well as Mr. P. have had very childish thoughts of redemption‡: but "when we be-"came men, we put away childish things;" while he retains and retails them as highly reasonable!

'The Christian mythology has five deities; there 'is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy 'Ghost; the god providence, and the goddess na-'ture!' Surely Mr. P. knew, that Christians consider the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as one God; and providence, as the superintending care of God over all his creatures. As for *Nature*, she is the Deist's goddess: the Bible says nothing about her *agency*, nor do any of those who "speak according "to the oracles of God."

Mr. P. is little acquainted with serious Christians: but, I believe, I may answer for most of them, that

* P. i. p. 31.
† 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18. iv. 1—6.
‡ P. i. p. 44

they bestow pains, as soon as their children become capable of instruction, in teaching them the doctrine of redemption by the death of Christ, as revealed in the holy Scriptures: and if men called Christians teach their children only *morals* and not the *principles of the Gospel*, they grievously misunderstand the Bible, and neglect their duty.

I have no objection to Mr. P.'s astronomy, or his opinion concerning a plurality of worlds, considered abstractedly. If these worlds be inhabited by rational creatures, which, however probable, is merely conjectural, either the inhabitants are sinners, or they are not.—If they be not sinners, they do not want a Saviour: but provided the way of man's salvation be made known to them, it may vastly enlarge their views of the Creator's harmonious perfections, and increase their admiring love and pure felicity. And it signifies not how mean or small the stage was, on which this glorious scene was exhibited; provided the whole obedient creation of God derive advantage from it, and render him eternal praises and adoration. If the supposed inhabitants of any of these worlds be sinners: we are sure that the Lord will not do them injustice: we do not say, that it is impossible for *him* to devise some other way of reconciling infinite justice with the exercise of mercy; though *we* cannot conceive how it can be done: and we do not know, but they may be left without mercy to condign punishment. All reasoning on such grounds is "intruding into things not seen," by men who are "vainly puffed up with a fleshly mind*." But for a

* Col. ii. 18.

philosopher, in this 'Age of Reason,' to suppose that the 'infinite God must have left the care of all worlds, 'when he came to save one,' is so gross an idea, that one cannot but stand amazed at it! We pretend not to comprehend the Deity; we allow that "without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, "God manifest in the flesh:" but the attributes of omnipresence and omnipotence must be inseparable from the Godhead; these absolutely exclude such notions as Mr. P. hath started; and I am persuaded they scarcely ever enter the mind of the most unlettered Christian; or if they do, they are rejected as gross absurdity, or diabolical suggestions*.

* P. i. p. 63.

CHAP. VII.

THE INSUFFICIENCY OF DEISM.

MR. P. enlarges on the sufficiency of Deism, and evidently considers it as his principal argument against the Scriptures. 'The creation is the only word of 'God, and natural philosophy the only preaching.' It is certain, however, that numbers do not so much as believe there is a God, or that he created and governs the world: so that this *revelation* and *preaching* are not universally intelligible and convincing.

"The invisible things of God, are" indeed "clear-"ly seen from the creation of the world, being un-"derstood by the things that are made, even his eter-"nal power and Godhead:" so that atheists and idolaters "are without excuse:" yet it is evident that men have almost as much neglected, misinterpreted, or differed about, this *revelation*, as that contained in the holy Scriptures. Only a very small proportion of the human race have gathered so much as deism from it: and the deists, who profess to believe in one God of infinite perfection, almost uni-

versally spring up in places where the Bible is known. They *borrow* or *steal*, or *imperceptibly to themselves acquire at second hand*, their glimmering light, from the very book against which they oppose it; and in different circumstances, they might have been atheists or idolaters: for this has been the case of almost the whole human species in every age, though probably none have been wholly destitute of all remains of original revelation.

It is unreasonable, to take a very few individuals, who have free access to the Scriptures, but reject a great part of them, as a specimen of the religion men may learn from the creation by the exercise of their understandings. To judge fairly on this subject, we should take our specimen from the inhabitants of New South Wales, or the newly discovered islands in the South sea and Pacific ocean; where the Bible has never been known: and the history of mankind from the beginning must be adverted to, before we bring in our verdict. For even the pagan moralists borrowed from the Scriptures: and after the æra of christianity, their sentiments on many subjects savour, as it were, of the New Testament.

But how are matters at present, even in Europe, among those who reject the Bible? Have they all recourse to *practical* deism. Is it not evident that they understand Mr. P.'s *revelation* almost as little, as they do that which they have renounced? This also wants *translating*, and *expounding*, or men will misunderstand it. Let the astronomer then become a preacher, and try how far science will go in making *pure deists*. He will soon find, that the husbandman, the artist, and the mechanic, with all the busy and

labouring part of mankind, can never spare time, money, or attention, to gain the necessary acquaintance with his principles and demonstrations, to enable him to begin his *practical deductions.* The bulk of the human species can never be instructed in this way: and even the few, who are not engrossed by business, or sunk in low sensuality, will find the process very tedious, indecisive, and inefficient.

But supposing moral truths, duties, and obligations could, by these or some other means, be clearly defined and established: the rules would want *authority* to enforce them; and men would remain destitute of sufficient motives to urge them forward, in a course that would require immense exertion and self-denial. What could the creation teach us decidedly concerning the moral perfections and government of God, or the *actual* immortality of the soul? This last, after all men's boasted demonstrations, can only be *known, by a discovery of the Creator's determination respecting it:* and even Mr. P. seems to think, uncertainty or doubtfulness is all that can be attained or would be useful on the subject*. Yet he himself in another place calls *doubtfulness the opposite of belief*†, in which he both contradicts the *truth* and *himself:* for *doubtfulness* is the middle point between *believing* and *disbelieving*.—The probability or possibility of a future state is, however, as he thinks, all we ought to know: without any acquaintance with the nature of it as happy or miserable, or the influence of our present conduct on our future condition. That is, we are in the dark, and it is best to be so: or in the

* P. ii. p. 100, 101. † P. ii. p. 69.

words of Scripture, "men love darkness rather than "light because their deeds are evil." This is deism, all-sufficient deism?

What then can the creation teach a man, concerning the way of finding relief from bitter remorse of conscience? obtaining the pardon of numerous and heinous crimes? finding peace with God and the enjoyment of his favour? gaining the victory over domineering lusts and habits, or strong temptations, or escaping the pollutions and snares of the world?—What can we thence learn, which will inspire a sinner's heart with calm reflecting consolation in deep scenes of distress; or enable him to meet death with exulting hope of future felicity?—A poor wretch, having fallen into a pit and broken his bones, lies languishing in agony and at the point of death, for want of assistance: and a passenger instead of helping him out, gravely teaches him how men ought to walk, and look to their steps when they travel on the road; and concludes by saying, 'This is sufficient, and all else is unnecessary!'

Man is evidently in a state of suffering and death: if he reflect at all, he forebodes a future state of retribution, and conscious of guilt he dreads the consequences. If he be so stupid as not to reflect, he wants to be warned, and made sensible of his true character and situation: if he be alarmed, he inquires what he must do to be saved? how he may escape condemnation, and obtain eternal life? Is it enough to say to such a man, All nature teaches us the being of a God: moral principles are rational and obvious: study the creation, practice morality; *possibly* there is a future state, *possibly* you may be

happy in it. This is all you ought to know? Does this fully meet the man's reasonable, important, and anxious inquiries, or at all suit his case?

But the word of God, authenticated by miracles, prophecy, and many infallible proofs, answers in the most explicit manner all the questions we can propose, on subjects so interesting to us; it gives full and express directions, encouragements, and assurances; and points out an adequate remedy and effectual refuge to the vilest of sinners. Thus "life "and immortality are brought to light by the Gos- "pel." Let common sense now determine whether these discoveries are unnecessary and useless. Is a pardon useless to a condemned criminal? a physician and a healing medicine to the sick? relief to the indigent, liberty to the captive, or sight to the blind? "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is "the kingdom of God." When the soul is truly humbled for sin, the Gospel is more suited to its case, than any illustration can adequately represent; but the self-sufficient and self-wise always did, and always will, secretly or openly, pour contempt upon it. This the Scripture hath predicted; and the conduct and spirit of those who oppose christianity abundantly verify those predictions.—The Bible proposes an adequate remedy to the wants of sinners; and the state of the world shows it to be extremely wanted. But Deism can pretend to nothing of the kind; and it is therefore indeterminate, inefficacious, and obscure, unsuitable to man's condition and character; and though abstractedly it may be said to be good as far as it goes, yet it is *wholly insufficient for all religious purposes in the present lapsed state of human nature.*

CHAP. VIII.

THE NATURE AND TENDENCY OF CHRISTIANITY.

MR. P. has *disingenuously* and *studiously*, as far as man can judge, confounded christianity with all the abuses and perversions of it; and with all the crimes that *masked* atheists have taken occasion from it to perpetrate. Let him, however, have full licence to abuse domineering churchmen and persecuting priests; let him exhaust his rhetoric in declaiming against purgatory, penances, and dispensations; or that kind of christianity which is inimical to solid learning and sober inquiry. But let not the pure religion of Scripture be blamed for those things, which are there both expressly predicted, and most severely condemned. I would not even go out of the way, to dispute for establishments, or national religions, though, when connected with an equal toleration, they do not at all cramp free inquiry; and, when properly managed, they secure to the bulk of mankind a measure of religious instruction, which would not otherwise be afforded them.

The religion of the Scriptures must be distinguished, not only from all *corruption* but from all *appendages*; and all *modes of promoting it*, however expe-

dient, which are not expressly commanded. This religion makes known to us the one living and true God; not only in his eternal power and Deity, but also in the mysteries of his nature, and the perfections of his character, as far as we are concerned to know them. Infinite wisdom, justice, purity, faithfulness, goodness, and mercy, harmoniously displayed, are here viewed in connexion with omnipotence, omniscience, unchangeableness, omnipresence, self-existence, and incomprehensible greatness and majesty. The Lord, being thus altogether glorious and lovely, the Creator of our bodies and souls, our continual and bounteous Benefactor, and our moral Governor and Judge, commands us to love him with all our hearts, and to love our neighbour as ourselves: and these comprehensive precepts reach to all our thoughts, words, and actions, and every possible duty to God and man.

This law, universally kept, would produce universal order, peace, and felicity; for it is in all respects, "holy, just, and good." By this rule all our conduct must be tried; and all the other precepts of Scripture are elucidations of it, and applications of its general requirements to our several cases and circumstances.—The Bible reveals also an eternal state of righteous retributions: and as all have broken the holy law of our God, we are no more able of ourselves to escape future condemnation, than we now are to elude the sentence of death; for, like other laws, it requires perfect obedience, and condemns every transgressor. Some information the Scriptures afford us, concerning the manner, in which our race was thus involved in sin and misery: but far more concerning the method of our recovery. The de-

scription, there given of our nature and character, does not indeed accord to the soothing speculations of many philosophers: but universal history, observation, and experience, prove that they answer exactly to facts; and the more any one studies his own heart, and compares his actions with the perfect law of God, the deeper will his conviction be, that the statement of Scripture is just, and his own self-flattering conclusions erroneous. The view given of the evil and demerit of sin is very offensive to our pride, and alarming to our consciences: yet deep reflection on the subject will convince us, that we cannot estimate, what degree or continuance of punishment crimes committed against God do actually deserve.

These things premised, we observe that the Scriptures especially reveal the plan of salvation for sinners, which infinite wisdom and love have formed and completed. This plan centres in the person of Christ, Emmanuel, God manifested in the flesh; in his righteousness, atonement, mediation, and grace; in his offices of Prophet, High Priest, and King; in his power to "save to the uttermost all that come to God "by him;" and in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and our renewal unto the divine image by his gracious influences.

All things having been made ready, in the obedience, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and his appearance in the presence of God for us: christianity consists in humble repentance of sin; a believing reliance on the merits and atonement of the Son of God, and on the mercy of the Father through him; a cordial acceptance of Christ in all his characters and offices; and dependance, connected with expe-

rience, on the Holy Spirit, for divine illumination, progressive sanctification, and pure consolation, all springing from *regeneration*. Thus the sinner, being converted and reconciled to God, justified by faith, and sealed by the Spirit of adoption, expects the performance of the promises in the use of appointed means; and animated by the motives and encouragements of the Gospel, he is inwardly and effectually taught by the "grace of God, to deny ungodliness "and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, "and godly in this present world." Thenceforth "he walks in newness of life." Love to God in Christ Jesus, and to men for his sake, becomes the temper of his heart, and the business and delight of his life. He is indeed still imperfect, and in a state of conflict: but as far as he acts according to his rule and obligations, he does no harm to any man, but all good to every one; in every way, which is in his power, and consistent with propriety. Humility, meekness, gentleness, forgiveness, benevolence, courteousness, compassion, self-denying, active beneficence, sincerity, equity, fidelity, sobriety, temperance, and purity, as well as piety, are the genuine effect of his principles. Were all men true and consistent Christians, wars would be impossible; fraud, oppression, slander, licentiousness, contentions, and all the crimes that disturb society, would cease: the stormy ocean of the world would be hushed into a calm: men would sooner lay down their lives for their enemies, than persecute: they would rather endure wrong, than commit it; or even contest their right unless required by other duties.

This is assuredly the religion of the Scriptures.—These have been, and still are, its effects on thousands: and could those believers, who are now scattered abroad in the world, be collected together into one society, and separated from all other men: such a scene of piety, purity, harmony, and felicity would be witnessed, as has never yet appeared on earth, except in the Christian church for a short time after the day of Pentecost. Though even these persons would in many respects come short of their duty, and the genuine tendency of their principles.

Every thing, contrary to this statement, militates against the very end of Christianity. No countenance is given in the Bible to persecutions, religious wars or massacres, pious frauds or imprecations: indeed all such things are condemned more severely in it than in any other book in the world. The judgments of God on his impenitent enemies, executed by men *expressly commissioned*, have nothing to do with our general conduct: but to inspire us with abhorrence of sin, which thus provokes a God of infinite goodness and mercy. The whole Scripture teaches us meekness and love of persecutors; love expressed, even by suffering or dying for them, if that could save them from destruction.—*Excommunication* denotes no more than seclusion from religious ordinances and societies, to preserve them pure, and to make the censured person ashamed, that he may be brought to repentance: for we are required not to "count him "as an enemy, but to admonish him as a brother:" and if any *penal* consequences followed in the primitive times, they were *miraculous*, and consequently cannot be imitated by us.

The system of christianity tends to expand the heart, into the most enlarged and disinterested benevolence that can be conceived: and its effects have been prodigious, notwithstanding abuses and declension from primitive purity, zeal, and simplicity. The gladiatorial shows, in which thousands of lives were sacrificed, to amuse Roman *ladies*, as well as more vulgar citizens, were never abolished till christianity prevailed against them. Hospitals, either wholly or in great measure, owe their origin to the same powerful cause. The humanity exercised even in war for some centuries past, compared with the savage cruelty of ancient times, is the effect of Christian principles. The change of sentiments also, which has taken place in respect to the glory or disgrace due to conquerors; and the very extensive protest made against the abominable slave trade, and the iniquity of slavery itself when not the punishment of atrocious crimes, are *wholly the result of scriptural principles.*

All, therefore, which Mr. P. has alleged on this subject, owes its plausibility to his uniform method of blaming christianity for those very abuses which it most severely reprobates; and of confounding the primitive church with the corrupted churches of subsequent ages; or the *Gospel with popery*, which are in most respects as opposite as light and darkness. Yet even corrupted christianity may be *slandered;* and it does not appear, that it is justly chargeable with that declension in science, which took place after the times of Christ, and issued in barbarous ignorance. Learning was very much declined, before christianity had produced any great effects on the

mass of mankind, and before it had at all influenced the Roman and Grecian scholars; and if afterwards superstition was inimical to science; churchmen almost alone preserved some remains of it, and were the chief instruments of at length effecting a revival. Vigilius and Galileo indeed were endangered by popish superstition and bigotry for their discoveries in philosophy: but *they* were professed Christians, and one of them a churchman.

It is certain, that the Bible does not discountenance natural knowledge, if preserved in due subordination to revealed truth. "The works of God are great, "sought out of all them that have pleasure therein*." It throws no impediment in the way to prevent improvement in any kind of useful knowledge: though it discourages presumptuous speculations; and exposes the folly of self-wisdom, insatiable curiosity, and vain reasonings about matters too deep for us. For "to man it is said, behold, the fear of the LORD "that is wisdom, and to depart from evil that is un-"derstanding†."

True Christianity was never propagated by the sword.—When Peter in his impetuosity smote Malchus, our Lord reproved him, and miraculously healed the wound which he had given: and on a former occasion, when the disciples wanted to call fire from heaven on the Samaritans, he rebuked them and said, "Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of; for "the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, "but to save them."—I am not concerned to vindicate all that *Christians have done*, but merely *what*

* Ps. cxi. 2. † Job xxviii. 28.

Christ hath enjoined: and whoever at any time hath used violent measures in promoting the Gospel, let him stand condemned, as acting in diametrical opposition to his instructions. It is a certain fact, that the primitive Christians prevailed without using any such methods; but if they had propagated christianity, as Mahomet did his imposture, by war and rapine, I would have maintained this distinction; that *he acted according to the principles laid down in the Koran; but they in express opposition to the precepts and principles of the Gospel. His* religion, therefore, was *justly* chargeable with the conduct which it sanctioned and required: christianity would not have been answerable for the base conduct of those who acted against its plain commands; but *they* alone ought to have borne the blame.

Mr. P. calls the precepts of the Scripture '*fragments of morality**.' But in what other book shall we find so complete and perfect a system of man's duty in all respects, enforced by such authority, and such powerful sanctions? He says, 'these fragments 'are irregularly and thinly scattered through these 'books, and make no part of revealed religion!' But was not the law delivered in the most solemn manner from Mount Sinai? and does it not virtually contain our whole duty to God and man? Is it not the *rule*, the transgression of which is called *sin?* and is not *sin* spoken of as deserving punishment, requiring repentance, and needing forgiveness? Does not the Scripture speak every where of Christ, as coming to magnify the *law* and make atonement for *sin?* Is it not

* P. ii. p. 93.

promised, that this *law* shall be written in the heart of all the Lord's true people? Is not this law enforced in its various requirements as branched out into many particular precepts, on all Christians, with the most earnest admonitions and exhortations? Are not the fruits of the spirit coincident with the demands of the law? and is it not said, that, "if any "man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his?" In short, love to God and man is the substance of all religion: and the whole plan of redemption, the whole system of the Gospel, was intended to put honour on this law; and, after a manner worthy of the divine perfections and government, to reinstate transgressors in the favour of God, and recover them to obedience, in part here, and perfectly in heaven hereafter.

Mr. P. says 'the New Testament teaches nothing 'new on this subject!' We allow that its dictates are also inculcated in the Old Testament, though not with equal clearness and energy: but where else shall we find them? Love of the excellency, and zeal for the honour of God, with delight in him and gratitude to him, are not taught by pagan moralists, with any tolerable degree of precision and authority. Neither Greeks nor Romans have a word in their languages, properly expressing the scriptural idea of *humility*. The most eminent Gentile writers substitute friendship and love of our country, which are frequently no more than a modification of self-love, in the place of disinterested and enlarged philanthropy. Even Cicero never decidedly protested against the murderous gladiatorial games, or the exposing of infants: against suicide, or revenge; nor even against unnatural crimes, though sanctioned by elegant and admir-

ed poets! even Cicero never inculcated the liberal expenditure of money, in relieving poor destitute plebeians, or alleviating the miseries of slaves and captives, out of pure compassion, without regard to personal credit or advantage. Refined self-love is the source, the centre, the object, and in most cases the rule, even *of his morality;* though he wrote far better on the subject than most of his predecessors. And if subsequent moralists have gone somewhat further we know whence they took their materials.

We allow, that Jewish *magistrates* were directed to retaliate on certain injurious persons: but the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy-"self," debarred Jews from private revenge, as much as the express commands of the New Testament do us.—Mr. P. objects to the precept; "If any man "smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other "also:" that is, "Bear injuries and insults patiently, "though that expose thee to more affronts; and enter "not into contention, if it can be avoided without neg-"lecting other duties." For proverbial expressions are not to be interpreted like mathematical theorems; and men are ready enough to make exceptions to such general rules. Yet he approves of Solomon's maxim*, in hopes to give the Gentiles the credit of it and does not know, that Paul has quoted it, as the substance of the duty of loving enemies†. No man I suppose, before Mr. P. ever thought we were commanded to love enemies better than friends, and to reward their injuries: but good-will, and acts of kindness when needed, are due to our most cruel

* Prov. xxv. 21. † Rom. xii. 19—21.

persecutors and the vilest criminals; and we ought to pray for their conversion and salvation. This, however, does not interfere with our special love to the righteous, gratitude to benefactors, and tender affection to relatives: for the Lord sends common benefits on the unthankful and evil, but reserves his special blessings for his obedient children.

I have, however, something further to say to Mr. P. on this subject, in reply to his *liberal* charges against christianity as a persecuting religion. In a paroxysm of zeal and indignation he exclaims; 'It is 'better, far better, thta we admitted, if it were possi- 'ble, a thousand devils to roam at large and to preach 'publicly the doctrine of devils—than that we should 'permit one such impostor or monster, as Moses,— 'and the Bible-prophets, to come with the pretended 'word of God in his mouth, and have credit among 'us*.' Now if Mr. P. could establish a government exactly to his mind, in any country where men resided who reverenced the Bible-prophets, and zealously preached the word of God, would this principle allow him to tolerate them? Would he lay no restraints on men, whom he deemed such mischievous monsters and vile impostors; and in case they would not be restrained from preaching, would he not inflict penalties? and if they continued obstinate, would not their contumacy expose them to heavier punishment? and does not this principle ultimately lead to exterminating persecution of all who adhere to the Bible, under the stale pretence that they disturb the peace of the community?

* P. ii. p. 47.

I have indeed long avowed an expectation of persecution, extensive dreadful persecution of real christians carried on by men, who now talk the most about toleration, candour, and liberality of sentiment, and exclaim against the intolerance and bigotry of zealous believers; for they show no *candour* to men strenuously maintaining the doctrines not long ago distinguished as orthodox.—Some declarations made by the late king of Prussia, concerning the difficulty he found in retaining Voltaire and several others, within the bounds which he prescribed for them; certain recent publications of French philosophers, atheists, and deists; and the strong passage just quoted from Mr. P. tend to confirm this opinion; and it is a subject well worthy the attention of all who sincerely love the Bible.

But at the same time, I avow an abhorrence of all persecution; and would have no man abridged in his civil rights, on account of his religious principles, if in *other respects* he be a peaceable member of the community. The smallest degree of persecution seems to me to contradict the *spirit of the Gospel:* nay, all bitterness, contempt, or reviling in controversy; and whatever is not necessary to defend the reader against the misrepresentations of a plausible writer, and the delusions to which he is exposed. On this subject let every one recollect our Lord's words, "Woe be to the world because of offences; for it "must needs be that offences come; but woe be to "that man, by whom the offence cometh!" For the most plausible argument in Mr. P.'s books, is taken from that very misconduct of Christians which our Lord expressly predicted.

Lay the things together, which we have considered. Advert to man's need of revelation, and the reasonableness of expecting one; the incontestable miracles, by which both the Old and New Testaments were introduced; the prophecies contained in the Scriptures, and their remarkable accomplishments; the suitableness of christianity to our wants, and the distinct answers it gives to the most interesting inquiries; its evident tendency and actual effects; the sublimity of its truths and the beauty of its precepts; its existence after so many ages, though it has been assaulted most vehemently from without, and disgraced most shamefully within; and the wonderful agreement of our present copies with ancient versions, though they have been handed down to us by Jews and papists: I say, take all these things together, and I cannot but think they amount to as *full a demonstration, as the subject admits of, that the Bible is the word of God.*

I would now observe in conclusion, that a serious mind is the grand requisite for obtaining satisfaction in an inquiry of this nature. If the reader sincerely desires to be preserved from mistake, and directed into the way of truth: let him give the Bible itself an impartial and diligent investigation. Let him act according to the dictates of his conscience without reserve, while he waits for fuller information. Let him use his understanding, and not be determined by his passions and prejudices. Let him ask himself whether he be as willing to be convinced that the Bible is true, as the contrary? And if he be conscious that he is not, let him honestly inquire after the cause of this prejudice, for if pride or love of for-

bidden objects bias his mind, an impartial verdict cannot be expected. Let no man who would know the will of God, pay the least regard to wit, ridicule, eloquent declamation, or virulent abuse: these suit corrupt nature, but they always tend to obscure the truth, or perplex and mislead the mind. Finally, as the belief of a God is taken for granted by all parties; and as God must in all senses, be the Fountain of knowledge and wisdom; let every inquirer beg of him to strengthen and assist his judgment, to keep his mind unbiassed, to enable him to distinguish truth from error, and to guide him in the path of everlasting felicity.

PRAYERS.

A Morning Prayer for a Family.

O Almighty and eternal God, we would humbly attempt to begin this day with worshipping thy great and glorious name. Thou art worthy of universal and everlasting adoration and thankful praise. Thy nature is incomprehensible, thy perfections infinite, thy goodness inexhaustible. Thou hast created all things; thou upholdest them by the word of thy power; and every one of thy works proclaims thy glory. Thou openest thy hand, and fillest all things living with plenteousness: and so abundant is thy goodness, that even the sinful children of men are invited to take refuge under the covert of thy wings! Thou art "in Christ reconciling the world unto thy-"self;" upon thy mercy-seat thou waitest to be gracious; and thy glorious wisdom, holiness, justice, and truth, are adored by the hosts of heaven, whilst thou dispensest pardons and showerest down blessings, on poor sinners who call upon thee. "Thou art exalted "above all blessing and praise." How then shall we, poor sinful worms, offer any acceptable tribute to thy name? Thou mightest justly reject both us and our worship, as below thy notice, or deserving thine

abhorrence: yet thou condescendest to say even of us, mean and guilty as we are, "Whoso offereth "praise, glorifieth me!" Yea, "thou inhabitest the "praises of Israel!" Enable us, therefore, we humbly beseech thee, O merciful Father, as a holy priesthood, to offer continually such spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, as are acceptable to thee through Jesus Christ; and do thou graciously accept our bounden duty and service, not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, through the mediation of thy well beloved Son.

But the more we meditate on thy glories and on our obligations, the viler we appear in our own eyes; remembering our manifold rebellions and base ingratitude. Our sins are indeed innumerable and inexcusable; and we would abhor ourselves on account of them, repenting in dust and ashes.—To us belong shame and confusion of face, because we have sinned against thee: but to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness: so that our deepest humiliation may be united with prevailing hope and animating confidence. But while we rejoice in Christ Jesus, as "made unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, "Sanctification, and Redemption;" may we expect the largest blessings from thy free bounty, fully convinced, that we merit nothing but thy wrath and indignation. Oh, grant we beseech thee, that our consciousness of guilt may endear to us the love of Christ, and may teach us forbearance and compassion to the vilest and most injurious of our fellow-sinners. Enable us in this manner to exercise patience and contentment; form our hearts to teachableness, and simplicity of dependence on thy promises; and teach

us readily to sit down in the lowest place, and in honour to prefer others to ourselves.

O gracious Saviour, we beseech thee to establish thy kingdom, and sway thy sceptre in our hearts, and reign Lord of all our affections: baptize us with thy sanctifying Spirit: cleanse away every pollution: consume the dross of our grovelling desires and imaginations: and transform us into thine own holy image. Teach us more fervently to love thy holy name; and inspire us with pure and ardent zeal for thy glory. Communicate to us heavenly wisdom, and give us a lively relish for spiritual pleasures. Grant, we pray thee, that we may be able to distinguish things which differ, and to approve such as are most excellent. Help us to walk in wisdom towards them that are without; and to understand and practise our several duties towards all with whom we are connected, and among whom we live. Teach us, how we may escape the snares, and resist the temptations of Satan: strengthen us with all thy might by thy Spirit in the inward man, that we may overcome the world, avoid its pollutions, renounce its friendship, and refuse conformity to all its sinful customs. Enable us to keep under the body and bring it into subjection; that so we may not use even lawful things in an inexpedient and injurious manner: and help us, in every respect, to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life.

We commend to thy care and blessing, O gracious Lord, all who are dear unto us. Teach us, we beseech thee, with persevering zeal, to use all proper means of doing them good, and of winning upon such as still neglect thy great salvation. Bless thy whole church:

Endue thy ministers with wisdom, clothe them with righteousness, and make them valiant and zealous for thy truth. Enable thy people to rejoice in thee: let thy grace be sufficient for them in all their trials and temptations; give them victory in every conflict; and prosper all their endeavours to glorify thy name, and do good to mankind. Send forth thy light and truth to the nations: dispel the dark clouds of idolatry, impiety, superstition, and infidelity; and set up thy kingdom of peace and righteousness throughout the earth. Continue, we humbly beseech thee, to bless our land with peace and liberty, and the light of thy Gospel; and may effectual measures be taken to stop the progress of wickedness and ungodliness; that so iniquity may not be our ruin. Enrich our chief magistrate, and all connected with him, or placed in authority under him, with thy choicest mercies: and do thou so direct the public councils, that such wise and salutary measures may be adopted, as thou wilt bless to the preservation of domestic harmony; the restoration and establishment of peace among the nations; the reformation of our manners, the revival of true religion, and the success of thy Gospel in other parts of the world. Visit with thy tender compassion and saving grace all the sons and daughters of affliction. While thy judgments are abroad in the earth, may the inhabitants learn righteousness: and do thou, O God, be pleased to frustrate the designs of all those, who are enemies to peace and true religion.

Be graciously present with us, O merciful Father, in the various employments and occurrences of the day; may we serve thee in the discharge of every duty, from pure evangelical motives, and with upright-

ness and fidelity. Leave us not, we intreat thee, to grieve thy Spirit, to wound our own consciences, to dishonour our profession, or to unfit ourselves for presenting our evening sacrifice of solemn worship. But grant, that "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we "do; we may do all to the glory of thy great name."

We beseech thee, O heavenly Father, to accept with mercy these our supplications; and to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, through Jesus Christ, our great High Priest and Advocate. To whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be honour and glory, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

An Evening Prayer for a Family.

O! THOU most glorious God, with whom a thousand years are as one day, and who dwellest in light inaccessible to mortal men: the return of night reminds us how short our time is; and how soon we must finally close our eyes on all things here below, to open them in the eternal world. Our days glide away almost unperceived: Oh leave us not to neglect the important work of life, through attention to the trifles with which we are surrounded! We feel all things here on earth to be vanity and vexation: our pains are many and increasing; our pleasures few and wasting. "Surely man walketh in a vain "shew! he disquieteth himself in vain! He heapeth "up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them!" "For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy "wrath we are troubled! thou hast set our iniquities

" before thee, and our secret sins in the light of thy " countenance." Teach us, therefore, O merciful God, so to meditate on the shortness, uncertainty, and vanity of things temporal: and on the reality, nearness, and importance of things eternal; that we may indeed be strangers and pilgrims on earth, and may seek a heavenly inheritance, with our warmest affections and most persevering diligence. Do thou make the thoughts of death and judgment so familiar to us, and so impressive on our hearts, that they may put vigour into our prayers: may excite us to earnestness in all the means of grace; may make us decided in renouncing every idol and iniquity; and may influence us so to act in all things, as may afford us comfort upon the bed of death.

Enable us, O Lord, to mark thy hand, and to submit to thy righteousness, in all the troubles of life, and in all the painful consequences of our sins. Give us such a knowledge of thy holy law, and of its spiritual and reasonable demands; that we may become fully sensible of our exceeding sinfulness, and be deeply humbled before thee in unfeigned repentance. May we never attempt to cover our transgressions, or to justify our conduct in thy sight; but may we so judge ourselves, that we may not be condemned at thy awful tribunal. Help us, O gracious Lord, to believe thy Gospel with living faith; and continually to come unto thee, as the Fountain of life and felicity, through the righteousness and redemption of our great High Priest, who ever liveth to make intercession for us. And give us we intreat thee, that confidence in thy pardoning mercy, and that love, gratitude, and zeal, which may prompt us to unreserved obedience, and

make us steadfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in thy work.

But, O thou heart-searching God, the imperfections and defilements of our best days and services are all open to thy view! Were the rest of our past lives buried in eternal oblivion, and an account of this one day required from us: our vain thoughts, idle words, and wrong tempers; our selfish desires and motives, and manifold omissions of duty, would leave us speechless and self-condemned before thee. Help us, then, we earnestly intreat thee, to apply to our consciences that atoning blood, which cleanseth from all sin: and neither leave us to discouragement through unbelief, nor suffer us to abuse thy grace by any allowed disobedience.

Whatever we have this day attempted, which had a beneficial tendency, do thou, O merciful Father, be pleased to prosper by thy blessing; and prevent the ill consequences of our errors and offences.—Sanctify to us thy dispensations, and our own experience: and help us to thank thee with unfeigned hearts, for the unmerited mercies and comforts, with which we have been favoured. Bless, O Lord, all endeavours to spread thy Gospel, and to promote the peace and happiness of mankind: and remember with peculiar regard such as are labouring in remote inhospitable regions, to make known thy salvation among poor benighted Pagans.

We commend ourselves, and all belonging to us, unto thy gracious protection. Thou art ever present, and knowest all things; thy majesty and condescension, thy justice and compassion, are alike infinite and adorable. "Thine is the kingdom, O

Lord, and thou art exalted as head over all." But we are exposed to countless dangers, and are wholly unable to defend ourselves. Be thou our strong Tower, and help us to take refuge under the shadow of thy wings. Preserve us from outward calamities, and from the assaults of our spiritual enemies. Help us seriously to inquire, whether we are indeed prepared to meet our God, should we be called hence this night? That we may be enabled to close our eyes, in well-grounded assurance, that death is ours; because we are Christ's, and possess the meekness for the incorruptible inheritance. Should we be spared, to awake in peace, and arise in health with the returning day: enable us, we beseech thee, to attend on thy worship and service with alacrity and gratitude. And thus may we "wait all the days of "our appointed time, till our change come," with calm submission, vigilant circumspection, and patient continuance in well doing. Vouchsafe us, O gracious Father, these and all other mercies, for the sake of thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ; whom with thee and the eternal Spirit, we would adore as the God of our salvation, both now and for evermore.

A Family Prayer for the Lord's Day Morning.

O THOU God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of all that truly believe in him; we meet together this morning to thank and bless thee, for sparing us to see another day of sacred rest; and to implore thy gracious aid in keeping it holy to thy name. Alas! how many sabbaths have some of us

wasted in vanity and folly, in sloth or worldly concerns, in frivolous company, amusement, or animal indulgence! And since we have known something of thy salvation, how very imperfectly have we obeyed thy command, of sanctifying thy holy day! If thou shouldst enter into judgment with us according to our deserts, our transgressions in this single point would leave us speechless under thy awful sentence of condemnation, But though we have thus been ungrateful and perverse; though we have robbed thee of thy hallowed time, and of the glory due to thy name; yet, we beseech thee, magnify thy mercy in pardoning our sins, and in giving us thy grace, that we may henceforth walk in newness of life.

We bless thy name, O Lord our God, that thou hast appointed this season of rest from our worldly pursuits; and made this provision for our spiritual advantage: and we thank thee, if our hearts are in any degree inclined to avail ourselves of so invaluable a benefit. Help us, we beseech thee, to remember thee as our Creator, who, having in six days made this world, and man to inhabit it, didst pronounce the whole *very good;* and didst rest on the seventh day, with full satisfaction and ineffable delight, in this display of thine eternal power and Godhead: and didst command man to keep it holy; to contemplate thy glories, to celebrate thy praises, and to rejoice in thy goodness. But, alas! how soon did sin mar thy good work, and derange this happy plan! And how can transgressors rejoice in a holy God, whose wrath they have incurred, and from whom their hearts are alienated? Blessed be thy name, O Lord, for the revelation of thy mercy in Christ Jesus, "the Lamb

" slain from the foundation of the world!" Now sinners may approach and rejoice in God their Creator, as their reconciled Father and Friend! We would therefore adore the displays of thy glory in the works thou hast made, and in the course of thy bounteous providence. All thou doest is worthy to be had in honour; and our obligations to thee as our Creator and Benefactor can never be sufficiently acknowledged. But when we contemplate the stupenduous plan of redemption, and view the incarnate Son of God dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification; we feel that this is, to us sinners, the most interesting and endearing of all the discoveries thou hast made of thyself; as well as the fullest display of the harmonious glories of thy character, in the view of thy whole intelligent creation. Oh, enable us, we pray thee, by the teaching of thy Holy Spirit, so to meditate on these subjects, especially on this season of sacred rest; that our hearts may be humbled in repentance, inspired with confidence, filled with admiring love and animating gratitude, and prepared for rendering thee our tribute of praise and thanksgiving. But, O Lord, the subject is too vast for us! Thy love passeth knowledge! We cannot worthily praise thy glorious perfections. Yet we beseech thee, in thy infinite condescension and fatherly compassion, to accept our feeble efforts, and to help us to love thee more, and praise thee better.

Grant, we beseech thee, that we may hallow this thy sacred day with reverence, devotion, and alacrity. Exclude from our thoughts and hearts all worldly cares; and let no circumstance arise, or person intrude, to interrupt us in its important and delightful

duties. May all the hours, which can be spared from matters of *real* necessity, be spent in works of piety and charity: may a spiritual mind render them pleasant to us; and may our converse and social intercourse be seasoned with piety, and promote mutual edification. Vouchsafe us thy special blessing in studying thy word, reviewing our past lives, calling to mind thy mercies, examining the state of our souls, and pouring out our hearts before thee.—May we count a day spent in thy courts better than a thousand; and be glad when it is said to us, let us go unto the house of the Lord. Leave us not to admit of any vain excuse, for not attending on thine ordinances: but grant that we may ever feel more disappointment when confined from thy worship, than when prevented from an expected interview with our dearest friends.—We would go, with the desire of our souls, to meet thee according to thy promise: and we beseech thee, enable us by faith to realize thy glorious and gracious presence, and solemnize and encourage our hearts; Oh grant us the assistance of thy Holy Spirit in every part of the sacred service: raise us above that dulness and langour which so often oppress us; and preserve us from the intrusion of vain and wandering thoughts. May our confession of sin, our prayers and supplications, our praises and thanksgivings, be the language of our inmost soul, and an acceptable sacrifice through Christ our Lord.

Prepare our hearts, O merciful Father, as good ground to receive the good seed of divine truth: and may thy word, read and preached, be heard by us in humble teachableness, mixed with faith, and applied to our own cases and consciences. Oh deliver us

from all our prejudices; remove every evil which closes our understandings, and every bias that warps our judgment. Instruct us where ignorant, rectify our mistakes, convince us of our sins, confirm our faith, encourage our hopes, enliven our affections: and thus fit us for serving thee, with wisdom and zeal, in the several stations in which we are placed. [*And when some of us shall meet at thy table, give us thy special help; that in deep repentance, lively faith, and fervent love, we may remember our dear Redeemer's sufferings and death, renew our acceptance of his salvation, render our tribute of grateful praise, and yield ourselves up to thy service, as "bought "with a price to glorify thee with our bodies and "spirits, which are thine." Thus may we 'feed on 'Christ in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving;' and be strengthened for every future service and conflict, by this "Bread of life which came down from "Heaven."]

Bless, we beseech thee, O gracious Lord, those who shall assemble with us in thy courts; [and those who meet with us at thy table;] vouchsafe to thy believing people all those good things, which we have asked, or should ask for ourselves. Compassionate those, who have hitherto been formal worshippers, and strangers to thy saving grace. Awaken the careless, undeceive the deluded, guide the inquirer, comfort the broken-hearted, confirm the wavering, and excite to diligence such as have been lukewarm and slothful. Assist and prosper thy servants, who labour among us in the word and doctrine. Give them wisdom, zeal, faithfulness, tenderness, and compassion.

* On the days when the Lord's Supper is administered.

Help them rightly to divide the word of truth, and to speak such things as suit the various characters and cases of the congregation. Give them much comfort and success in their work; and grant them many seals to their ministry, who may be their joy here, and their crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. Remove every hindrance to their usefulness; and bring forth many from all around, whom thou wilt make partakers of thy saving grace, and instruments of diffusing the light of thy truth, and of handing it down to future generations, that the children who are yet unborn may praise the Lord. Vouchsafe the same blessings to all faithful pastors and their congregations; and grant that all who are called ministers of Christ 'may be illuminated with the knowledge of 'thy truth,' and both by their doctrine and example make it known, and recommend it to mankind.

Send forth, O thou Lord of the harvest, more labourers thoroughly furnished for thy work. Enlighten the dark parts of the earth with thy saving grace. Remember with special regard, such as are employed in distant regions and arduous circumstances, to make known thy Gospel; comfort their hearts, prosper their endeavours, and raise them up many helpers. Purify thy church from scandals and heresies. Cause divisions among Christians to cease. "Multi-"ply mercy, grace, and peace, to all that love the "Lord Jesus in sincerity;" and by the prevalence of thy Gospel terminate wars all over the earth.

Look in mercy on such as are confined from thy courts by sickness or family affliction; and by thine immediate teaching and blessing, make up to them the want of public ordinances. Pity the multitudes,

who are every where profaning thy holy sabbath, and give them repentance unto salvation. Remember all with whom we have at any time gone to the house of God in company; and let our prayers, though now separated, be accepted for each other. Be with us through the day. May we be edified, and thy name be glorified; and may we meet in the evening, with peaceful consciences and thankful hearts. Hear us through the merits and mediation of thy beloved Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

A Family Prayer for the Lord's Day Evening.

O THOU most holy and merciful God, we, thine unworthy servants, desire this evening to review, as in thy presence, the day past; humbling ourselves for our sinfulness, and thanking thee for all thy loving kindness.

When we endeavour to examine any part of our conduct, or to compare it with thy holy law; we never fail to discover abundant cause for humiliation. Alas, not only have our actual transgressions and omissions been innumerable and aggravated: but each of us has cause to exclaim, when contemplating thy glories, "Woe is me for I am undone, be- "cause I am one of unclean lips, and mine eyes have "seen the King, the Lord of Hosts!" O God! our very worship is so defiled and defective; that, instead of atoning for our past sins, or recommending us to thy favour, it needs thy gracious forgiveness. and

must be washed in the blood of Christ. Pardon then, we beseech thee this evening, whatever thy holy eyes have seen amiss in the duties of the day: the wanderings of our hearts, the coldness of our affections; our want of reverence, love, and gratitude; the weakness of our faith, the wavering of our hope; the mixture of self-seeking and regard to men, with which our religious services have been contaminated. And grant that all our supplications and thanksgivings, as far as they have been uprightly presented before thy throne of grace, under the influence of thy Holy Spirit, may be mercifully accepted, through the mediation of our heavenly Advocate. We desire, also, O Lord our God, to crave thy fatherly forgiveness of every thought, word, and action, by which we have grieved thy Spirit, dishonoured thy name, or counteracted the gracious designs of this thy holy day. Wash us thoroughly from all our sins in the fountain of atoning blood; and vouchsafe us the comfort of thy pardoning love, and the enjoyment of thy peace, before we close our eyes in sleep.

Suffer not, O merciful Lord, the ordinances of this sacred season to rise up at last in judgment against us, to our confusion or condemnation: let not thy word of Grace be a savour of death to any individual now before thee. But, O thou giver of every good gift, teach us to improve our advantages; and render the *transient* seasons of public ordinances a *permanent* blessing to our souls. Let us not rest satisfied, with having been serious, impressed, affected, or comforted, when hearing thy word; or with conscious sincerity in our worship, [or in our engagements at thy table:] but let us so meditate upon these things with

self-application and fervent prayer; that our judgment may be matured, our spiritual wisdom and discernment increased, our faith and hope established, our affections purified and invigorated, and our wills rendered more submissive by every attendance on the means of grace. Thus enable us to "give the "more earnest heed to the things we have heard; "lest at any time we should let them slip." Suffer us not to be as "children tossed to and fro with "every wind of doctrine:" but make us such Christians, as "by reason of use have their senses exer- "cised to discern good and evil." [And may we also remember that the vows of God are upon us: and in all the transactions of life, duly consider, that we have avouched the Lord to be our God; and ourselves to be his people, as redeemed unto him by the blood of his Son.] May we carry the instructions of thy word, and the savour of thy holy ordinances, along with us, into all the secular affairs of the ensuing week; to teach us wisdom and circumspection, to arm us against temptation, to be the light of our steps, and the strength of our heart. Oh grant, that as the face of Moses shone, when he came down from the mount: so when we go from communion with thee, in thy solemn worship; our light may shine before men, to the glory of thy name, and the adorning of the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

Prosper, we beseech thee, the labours of all those who have any where, this day preached the word of truth in simplicity and godly sincerity. May thy people be edified in their most holy faith, and sinners in great numbers be converted unto thee. And, where serious impressions have been made, let them

be rendered effectual unto eternal salvation. Hear all the supplications, which have this day been presented before thee by thine assembled people; for themselves, their children and relatives; for thy whole church, for all ranks and orders of men, and for the whole human race; according to their several wants, trials, or circumstances. May thy cause every where prevail; may thy truth run and be glorified. Oh stop the progress of false doctrine, and lift up a standard against infidelity, impiety, and licentiousness: and let peace, and the Gospel of peace fill the whole earth.

And now, O heavenly Father, we commend ourselves to thy keeping this night. Watch over us and our habitation. Give us the comforts of refreshing sleep; and defend us against all enemies, especially those that would injure our souls. And grant, that by hallowing thy sabbath on earth, we may be rendered more and more "meet to be partakers of the "inheritance of the saints in light." May all our days and weeks be thus begun, continued, and ended with thee: and grant that all we, who now unite in prayer on earth, may at length meet before thy throne in heaven, to sing thy praises and triumph in thy love, through the righteousness, atonement, and intercession of our great High Priest, and to the honour of his name, who is with thee, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, God over all, blessed for evermore. Amen.

End of Vol. I.

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